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DOCUMENTS ON BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY 1919—1939

EDITED BY

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PREFACE

THE documents in this volume cover the period—roughly nine weeks—from April 4 to June 7, 1939. Chapters I and II deal with M. Beck's visit to London, the Italian attack on Albania, and the announcement of the British guarantees to Greece and Roumania. Henceforward the two main themes of the volume are the increasing German threats to Poland, and the efforts of His Majesty's Government to bring into existence a common front, including Turkey and the U.S.S.R., against further German and Italian aggression.

The negotiations with the Turkish Government resulting in the Anglo-Turkish Declaration of May 12, 1939, are narrated in Chapters II, III, IV, V, and VI. The negotiations with the Soviet Government continue throughout the volume, and are brought down to the Prime Minister's statement of June 7, 1939, in the House of Commons on the course of the discussions, and the decision to send Mr. Strang to Moscow to inform H.M. Ambassador more fully of the views of His Majesty's Government. Throughout these weeks of inconclusive exchanges with the Soviet Government His Majesty's Government were attempting, without success, to meet Soviet objections to their proposals and to harmonize the requirements put forward by the Soviet Government with the refusal of Poland, Roumania, and the other western neighbours of the U.S.S.R. to receive, directly or indirectly, any Soviet guarantee.

For the convenience of the reader the material on the period from April 14 to June 7 is divided into seven chapters, but, as the first title ('The European Situation') common to each chapter shows, there is no halting-place or decisive date during these weeks, at all events as the story is told from the British side. Hitler's speech of April 28 denouncing the German-Polish Agreement of 1934 and existing Anglo-German Naval Agreements, the replacement of M. Litvinov on May 3 by M. Molotov as People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, the conclusion of the German-Italian Alliance of May 22 were important episodes, but it is clear from the narrative that no one of them appeared or indeed could appear to British observers in the Foreign Office or abroad as finally determining the question of peace or war. It is also necessary, in considering retrospectively the course of British policy during this period, to take increasing account of the situation in the Far East. The documents dealing with this situation will be printed in the two concluding volumes of this Series.

There are two appendixes to the present volume. Appendix I contains additional letters on the European situation in April and May 1939. These letters, though not of sufficient importance to be included in the main text, are printed as throwing light on the writers' own views. The second Appendix is a Foreign Office memorandum of May 5, 1939, on the Danzig question.

The conditions under which the Editors accepted the task of producing the volumes in this Collection, i.e. access to all papers in the Foreign Office Archives, and freedom in the selection and arrangement of documents, continue to be fulfilled. I have been unable, however, to obtain the consent of the Belgian Government to the publication of seven documents regarding Belgian matters which I should otherwise have included in this volume.

I am much in debt to those who have helped in the production of the volume, and, in particular, to Miss A.W. Orde, M.A., for her work as Assistant Editor, and to Miss E. McIntosh, M.B.E. for taking over once more the preparation of the Chapter Summaries. Miss M. Turner, M.A., has also been of great help in the later stages of producing the book. Mr. C. H. Fone, M.B.E. and his staff in the Reference Room of the Foreign Office Library, under the direction of the Librarian, have again given me most valuable assistance in finding material.

E. L. WOODWARD

March, 1952

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I. M. Beck's visit to London, April 4-6: events leading to the announcement of the British guarantee to Roumania. (April 4-13, 1939)	1-115
CHAPTER II. The Italian attack on Albania: the announcement of the British guarantee to Greece. (April 3-14, 1939)	116-197
CHAPTER III. The European situation: Italy, Turkey and the Balkans: correspondence with the French and Soviet Governments with regard to proposals for checking further German aggression. (April 14-21, 1939)	198-274
CHAPTER IV. The European situation: visit of the Roumanian Foreign Minister to London, April 23-26: Herr Hitler's speech of April 28: further correspondence with the French and Soviet Governments: Anglo-Turkish negotiations. (April 22-30, 1939)	275-381
CHAPTER V. The European situation: Polish-German relations: further British proposals and Soviet counter-proposals: correspondence with the Vatican. (May 1-6, 1939)	382-457
CHAPTER VI. The European situation: Polish-German relations: further correspondence with the Soviet Government: Anglo-Turkish Declaration of May 12. (May 7-12, 1939)	458-546
CHAPTER VII. The European situation: further correspondence with the Soviet Government: Anglo-Turkish negotiations: the Danzig question. (May 13-20, 1939)	547-621
CHAPTER VIII. The European situation: Anglo-Russian negotiations: the Danzig question. (May 21-26, 1939)	622-699

CHAPTER IX. The European situation: Anglo-Italian relations: the position in Danzig: decision to send Mr. Strang to Moscow: Anglo-French proposals to Soviet Government. (May 27-June 7, 1939)	. 700-794
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APPENDIXES

I. Additional letters on the European situation, April-May, 1939	. 795-808
II. Foreign Office memorandum on the Danzig question with additional comments by Sir N. Henderson	. 809-818

CHAPTER SUMMARIES

CHAPTER I

M. Beck's visit to London, April 4-6: events leading to the announcement of the British guarantee to Roumania. (April 4-13, 1939.)

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
1 RECORD OF CONVERSATIONS	April 4	Record of conversations at Foreign Office with Polish Minister for Foreign Affairs regarding British proposal to Poland and Roumania.	1
2 RECORD OF CONVERSATIONS	April 4	Record of conversations at second meeting with Polish M.F.A. at which Prime Minister was present.	9
3 To SIR W. SEEDS Moscow Tel. No. 54	April 4	Expresses surprise at M. Litvinov's attitude regarding British guarantee to Poland and recapitulates occasions on which Soviet Ambassador was informed of course of events leading up to Prime Minister's declaration.	20
4 To SIR W. SEEDS Moscow No. 237	April 4	Records information given to Soviet Ambassador by Sir A. Cadogan on March 29 regarding Prime Minister's statement in House on March 28 and in particular to his replies to parliamentary questions concerning assurances to be given to Polish and Roumanian Governments.	21
5 To SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw No. 179	April 4	States that Polish Ambassador has been given outline of proposals which have been put to Polish and Roumanian Governments in an endeavour to stem German aggression: records Count Raczynski's observations on German-Polish relations.	23
6 MR. SHEPHERD Danzig No. 86	April 4	Submits chronological summary of principal events and incidents connected with recent developments in Danzig-German-Polish situation in so far as they affect Free City.	24
7 SIR G. OGILVIE-FORBES Berlin Tel. No. 234	April 5	Reports comments of official at Ministry of Foreign Affairs to member of Embassy staff that British guarantee to Poland had come as a complete surprise to German Government.	28
8 SIR G. OGILVIE-FORBES Berlin Tel. No. 235	April 5	Reports information from Italian colleague regarding German proposals to Polish Government for settlement of Danzig question.	28

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
9 SIR R. HOARE Bucharest Tel. No. 102	April 5	Message for Sir O. Sargent suggesting action which might be taken to relieve anxiety of M.F.A. regarding view taken by H.M.G. of Roumanian Government's reply to Anglo-French proposals, contained in Bucharest telegram No. 96 of April 2.	29
10 RECORD OF CONVERSATIONS	April 5	Record of conversations at third meeting with Polish M.F.A. in Prime Minister's room in House of Commons regarding British proposal to Poland and Roumania.	30
11 MR. EDEN	April 5	Transmits record of conversation with M. Beck regarding international situation. M. Beck emphasized determination of Poland never to submit to German rule.	36
12 SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw No. 83	April 5	Transmits reports from Military and Air Attachés on strength of Polish military and air forces.	38
13 SIR W. SEEDS Moscow Tel. No. 59	April 6	Refers to No. 3 and suggests reasons for M. Litvinov's attitude: offers suggestions for meeting his complaints.	45
14 SIR G. OGILVIE-FORBES Berlin Tel. No. 243	April 6	Reports that Herr Hitler has now retired to Berchtesgaden to consider his future attitude to Poland and Roumania.	46
15 TO SIR R. HOARE Bucharest Tel. No. 89	April 6	Refers to No. 9 and states that considerations advanced in Roumanian Government's reply to Anglo-French proposals are being sympathetically examined and that points at issue will be discussed with Roumanian Minister after his return to London.	46
16 RECORD OF CONVERSATIONS	April 6	Summary of conclusions reached during conversations with Polish M.F.A. held between April 4 and 6.	47
17 TO SIR E. PHIPPS Paris No. 834	April 6	Records conversation with French Ambassador who expressed appreciation of M. Daladier and M. Bonnet regarding declaration of H.M.G. in respect of Poland. M. Corbin expressed anxiety of French Ministers regarding long delay that must elapse before substantial British land forces would be able to co-operate with French Army. Questions of Albania and Spain also discussed. M. Corbin informed that there was some indication that if French Government were willing, Italian Government would be prepared to discuss Italian claims.	49
18 TO SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw No. 183	April 6	Records discussion with Polish Ambassador regarding guarantee to Poland and present German-Polish relations.	51
19 TO SIR W. SEEDS Moscow No. 255	April 6	Records conversation with Soviet Ambassador when M. Maisky was informed of general lines on which conversations with Polish M.F.A. had proceeded.	53

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
20 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 146	April 7	Reports information from Political Director of Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding indications they had received of movement of German troops from Czecho-Slovakia and projected sudden attack on French front; also indications from other sources of German and Italian troop movements to Yugoslav frontier and preparations in Libya for attack on Egypt and Tunisia.	54
21 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 148	April 7	Refers to No. 20 and reports that General Gamelin's A.D.C. confirmed that report regarding attack on France came from Swiss source and stated that he did not think Swiss sources generally very reliable.	55
22 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 150	April 7	Refers to No. 21 and states that M. Bonnet does not attach much importance to report which he said came from an informant in Prague. M. Bonnet feels possibility should be borne in mind that reports may be circulated by Germans in order to create a war of nerves.	55
23 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 151	April 7	Reports latest information received from Ministry of Marine, Air Ministry, and Military authorities regarding German and Italian troop movements.	55
24 To H.M. REPRESENTATIVES Warsaw Washington Paris Berlin Rome Tokyo Budapest Sofia Angora Moscow Bucharest Belgrade Athens Cairo	April 7	Instructions regarding action to be taken respecting summary of conclusions reached during conversations in London with Polish M.F.A., which is being sent in immediately following telegram (see No. 16).	56
25 To SIR H. KNATCHBULL-HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 76	April 7	Records information given to Turkish Ambassador regarding conversations which have taken place with Polish M.F.A.	57
26 SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 34 Savig	April 7	Reports conversation with German Ambassador who expressed view that as result of M. Beck's conversations in London, Poland would be encouraged to resist all German demands both in regard to Danzig and minority questions.	58
27 SIR G. KNOX Budapest No. 47	April 7	Transmits report on Hungary's seizure of Ruthenia.	59

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
28	SIR G. KNOX Budapest No. 48	April 7	Refers to No. 27 and reviews circumstances which have led to present tension between Hungary and Roumania: discusses future of Hungarian-Roumanian relations.	61
29	SIR R. HOARE Bucharest Tel. No. 105	April 8	Reports anxiety of M.F.A. regarding articles in Hungarian press advancing territorial claims and report from Paris that, having regard to Polish 'alliance' with Hungary, Polish M.F.A. has refused to assist Roumania in resisting Hungarian attack.	64
30	TO SIR R. HOARE Bucharest Tel. No. 93	April 8	Records conversation of Roumanian Minister with Sir A. Cadogan regarding British guarantee to Poland and Roumanian-Polish relations.	65
31	SIR G. OGILVIE-FORBES Berlin Tel. No. 252	April 8	Reports information from Polish Military Attaché that German army had been ordered to hold itself in state of readiness to move: comments thereon.	67
32	TO SIR E. PHIPPS Paris No. 845	April 8	Records conversation with French Ambassador regarding German reaction to Anglo-Polish agreement: comments of M. Corbin on Polish-Roumanian relations.	67
33	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw No. 91	April 8	Reports satisfaction caused in all classes of population by Prime Minister's declaration of March 31 and by results of M. Beck's visit to London: summarizes press comments thereon.	68
34	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris No. 427	April 8	Transmits two memoranda by Assistant Military Attaché regarding probable intentions of Herr Hitler and Signor Mussolini.	70
35	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw	April 8	Letter to Sir O. Sargent referring to No. 12 and setting forth views of French Ambassador regarding urgent needs of Polish Army: French Ambassador considers that Poles would accept aid from Russia if in dire straits, provided it did not involve Russian troops entering Polish territory.	72
36	TO SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 88	April 10	Understands that Polish Government are consulting with Roumanian Government on question of Polish guarantee to Roumania: trusts that M. Beck will make every effort to secure rapid progress and keep H.M.G. informed.	73
37	TO SIR R. HOARE Bucharest No. 163	April 10	Records conversation with M. Cretzianu, Secretary-General of Roumanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Roumanian Minister regarding British proposals to Roumania, Polish-Roumanian relations, question of Soviet aid for Roumania, Hungarian-Roumanian relations and attitude of Turkey.	74

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
38 SIR G. KNOX Budapest No. 53	April 10	Reports situation as result of Hungarian penetration into Slovakia: discusses question of German complicity in Hungarian moves and expresses opinion that war would seem to be inevitable.	77
39 SIR R. CAMPBELL Belgrade	April 10	Letter to Sir A. Cadogan informing him of conversation with Prince Paul who had received messages from Italian Ambassador in Berlin that he believed Germans had decided on a 'preventive' war, i.e. to strike before their 'encirclement' was completed: German Military Attaché in Belgrade had given a similar hint to Yugoslav General Staff.	79
40 SIR R. HOARE Bucharest Tel. No. 109	April 11	Reports suggestion of M.F.A. that, as Polish M.F.A. apparently disliked idea of guaranteeing Roumania, Anglo-French-Polish defensive pact should be maintained and Roumania should receive an Anglo-French guarantee in return for her declared intention to resist aggression: M. Gafencu also suggested that it might be good move for Roumanian Government to try to obtain political guarantee from Germany, and perhaps similar arrangement could be reached regarding Yugoslavia.	80
41 SIR R. HOARE Bucharest Tel. No. 110	April 11	Reports M.F.A.'s view that proposed Polish-Roumanian pact, if achieved, would be regarded by Germany as an attempt at encirclement: he believed Roumania's best contribution to peace was to convince Germany that door was open to all for peaceful and productive work in Balkans: if Roumania were attacked she would resist.	81
42 To SIR W. SEEDS Moscow No. 230	April 11	Records conversation with Soviet Ambassador when general international situation discussed: views of M. Maisky regarding respective feelings of Poland and Roumania towards U.S.S.R.	82
43 MR. PARES Bratislava No. 20	April 11	Transmits copy of despatch addressed to H.M. Chargé d'Affaires at Prague dated April 11 respecting conditions in Slovakia.	84
44 SIR R. HOARE Bucharest Tel. No. 115	April 12	Comments on question of possible Soviet help for Roumania: reports conversation with M.F.A. who urged that Anglo-French guarantee be given to Roumania: M. Gafencu stated that German Government had intimated that they were not interested in Hungarian claims and were ready to give Roumania political guarantee. Referring to his visit to Turkey, M.F.A. said that he and Turkish M.F.A. were agreed that their two countries should support Great Britain and France.	91
45 MR. TROUTBECK Prague Tel. No. 214	April 12	Reports information from French colleague regarding troop movements in Protectorate.	93

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
46 SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 105	April 12	Reports information from M.F.A. that there has been no new development as regards Danzig or any other question outstanding with Germany: also there had been no indication of German troop movements of disquieting nature.	93
47 SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 104	April 12	Refers to No. 36 and reports that Polish Ambassador in Bucharest has been instructed to take up matter with Roumanian Government: reports information from M.F.A. regarding instructions given to Polish Ambassador in Budapest to warn Hungarian Government of danger of any unfriendly measures taken against Roumania.	94
48 To SIR E. PHIPPS Paris No. 876	April 12	Records conversation with French Ambassador regarding declaration to be made by French Government on April 13 and views of H.M.G. respecting importance of Turkish attitude in deciding on question of declaration regarding Roumania.	95
49 FRENCH AMBASSADOR London	April 12	<i>Aide-mémoire</i> urging that H.M.G. should include Roumania in declaration to be made by Prime Minister regarding Greece, thus bringing his statement into line with that to be issued by French Government on April 13.	96
50 To SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw No. 215	April 12	Records conversation with Polish Ambassador regarding Polish-Roumanian consultation, proposed British and French declarations respecting Greece, position of Turkey, action Polish Government likely to take in event of Great Britain being involved in war with Germany in defence of smaller Western European Powers, attitude of Soviet Government and Polish-German relations.	97
51 SIR G. OGILVIE-FORBES Berlin	April 12	Letter to Mr. Strang referring to Military Attaché's views of March 30 regarding opportune time to fight a preventive war, and enclosing memorandum by Air Attaché in which he points out that from air point of view, trial of strength with Germany should be postponed.	99
52 SIR W. SEEDS Moscow Tel. No. 61	April 13	Discusses possible developments should Poland and Roumania continue to refuse to co-operate with or even consult Soviet Union in present crisis: urges that some means may be found by H.M.G. to persuade these countries to accept some form of Soviet military assistance.	104
53 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 164	April 13	Reports that M. Daladier insists on including Roumania in his declaration to be made at 3 o'clock on April 13 and urges that H.M.G. should take same step as whole situation can be saved only by clear declaration by the two Western Powers at once.	105

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
54 SIR R. HOARE Bucharest Tel. No. 118	April 13	Refers to No. 44 and reports that M.F.A. has begged him most earnestly to support request that has been made through Roumanian Minister for mention in Prime Minister's statement on April 13 of readiness of H.M.G. to assist Roumania if attacked.	105
55 SIR R. HOARE Bucharest Tel. No. 119	April 13	Reports that M.F.A. received on night of April 12, through Yugoslav and Polish Ambassadors, report of representations made by Hungarian Government on subject of Roumanian concentration on frontier: reports action taken by Roumanian Government.	106
56 SIR G. OGILVIE-FORBES Berlin Tel. No. 276	April 13	Reports information from U.S. Chargé d'Affaires regarding approach made to him by General Halder, Chief of German General Staff: General Halder expressed concern at attitude of United States towards Germany.	107
57 To SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 151	April 13	Refers to No. 53 and states that in view of M. Daladier's urgent appeal, guarantee to Roumania will be announced in declaration to be made on afternoon of April 13.	107
58 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 166	April 13	Refers to No. 57 and conveys thanks of M. Daladier for action taken.	108
59 To SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 97	April 13	Instructions to inform Polish Government that H.M.G. have decided to give guarantee to Roumanian Government forthwith: French Government taking similar action.	108
60 To SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 101	April 13	Instructions to inform Turkish Government that H.M.G. have decided to give guarantee to Roumanian Government forthwith and that French Government taking similar action: H.M.G. maintain all proposals they have made to Turkish Government and will wish to continue discussions with them of best methods for developing their co-operation.	108
61 To SIR R. HOARE Bucharest Tel. No. 115	April 13	Instructions to inform Roumanian Government that H.M.G. have decided to give forthwith to Roumanian Government guarantee such as they had proposed giving in conjunction with French and Polish Governments: French Government taking similar action.	109
62 SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 121	April 13	Reports decision of M.F.A. to endeavour to bring Bulgaria into Balkan Entente and to ask Roumanian Government to give an undertaking that Dobrudja question should be reconsidered after a stated interval of time.	109
63 SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 126	April 13	Refers to No. 62 and reports steps taken by M.F.A. to give effect to his decision.	110

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
64	To SIR R. CAMPBELL Belgrade Tel. No. 98 To SIR G. KNOX Budapest Tel. No. 20 To SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 101	April 13	Refers to No. 55 and asks for observations: states that Hungarian Minister on April 12 informed Foreign Office that should Roumanian mobilization continue, Hungarian Government would be compelled to take similar measures within next few days.	110
65	To SIR R. HOARE Bucharest No. 174	April 13	Records conversation of M. Cretzianu with Sir A. Cadogan regarding H.M.G.'s proposals. M. Cretzianu stated that Roumanian Government feared negotiations with Poland might take some time and were therefore anxious for immediate declaration of support from H.M.G.: negotiations with Hungary were not going well and reply of latter to request that they should respect frontier was unsatisfactory.	111
66	To SIR E. PHIPPS Paris No. 877	April 13	Records reply of M. Daladier to views expressed by H.M.G., through French Ambassador, regarding question of immediate guarantee to Roumania: transmits copy of proposed form of declaration to be made by French Government announcing their guarantee.	113

CHAPTER II

The Italian attack on Albania: the announcement of the British guarantee to Greece. (April 3-14, 1939.)

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
67	SIR A. RYAN Durazzo Tel. No. 21	April 3	Reports that great nervousness prevails in country regarding intentions of Italian Government: according to Greek colleague demands had been made for acceptance by Albania of extensive administrative control and admission of camouflaged troops.	116
68	EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 255	April 3	Reports information from ex-Czechoslovak Military Attaché, which he had received from Italian source, that Italy would occupy Albania in course of next few days.	117
69	EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 256	April 3	Reports information from French Military Attaché regarding conversation he had with Italian General stationed at Bari: troops under command of General had special mission and were practising embarkation and disembarkation. General Toussaint had impression that 'special mission' was Albania which would be seized by Italy in event of war.	117

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
70 EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 258	April 4	Reports information given to Military Attaché by Italian Director of Military Operations and Intelligence regarding calling up of reservists and movements of troops: Colonel Tripiccone stated that all necessary precautions had been taken to defend Italian frontiers against France in Europe and North Africa, but that no intention of offensive action existed.	118
71 SIR A. RYAN Durazzo Tel. No. 22	April 4	Reports that anti-Italian demonstrations have taken place and states that real facts of situation are difficult to obtain: some of Italian demands likely to deprive Albania of her independence and King is determined to resist these although willing to make large concessions otherwise.	119
72 EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 263	April 4	Reports information from M.F.A. regarding Italian position and past recent history in regard to Albania: Italian Government had no wish to change <i>status quo</i> and were solely concerned with protection of certain interests which they considered had been threatened: Lord Perth expressed hope that no action would be taken by Italy which would impair Anglo-Italian Agreement.	120
73 EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 265	April 4	Reports statement of M.F.A. that if France were prepared to take initiative Italy would not refuse discussion regarding questions at issue between the two countries.	121
74 SIR O. SARGENT Foreign Office	April 4	Minute recording information from Greek Minister regarding Italian designs on Albania: according to one report Albanian Government foresaw that in near future Italy intended to try to impose an Italian Protectorate over Albania: King determined to resist any demands which would endanger independence and integrity of international status of Albania.	122
75 EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 271	April 5	Reports contents of two telegrams received by U.S. Embassy from their Minister in Tirana stating that Italian demands amounted to establishment of Protectorate over Albania: King Zog determined to resist demands and was appealing to Powers of Little Entente and Great Britain and France.	123
76 EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 275	April 6	Reports that M. François-Poncet is very anxious that conversations between Italy and France should begin and that he has urged his Government in this sense: M. Daladier, however, strongly opposed to conversations with Italy and French Ambassador wondered whether H.M.G. could influence French Government to take some steps to promote better relations between France and Italy.	124

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
77	To EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 159	April 6	Instructions to inform M.F.A. that H.M.G. are glad to have assurances of Italian Government regarding Albania as contained in No. 72, and that they feel sure Italian Government will agree that it is matter of interest to both Governments that <i>status quo</i> as regards national sovereignty of territories in Mediterranean area should be maintained.	125
78	To SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 128	April 6	Points out that contents of No. 76 have considerable bearing on instructions contained in No. 79 and states that it is left to discretion of Sir E. Phipps to judge how far he can give advice to M. Daladier and M. Bonnet on lines suggested by M. François-Poncet.	126
79	To SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 119 Saving	April 6	Instructions to give M. Bonnet full facts of interview of Counsellor of H.M. Embassy in Rome with Count Ciano when Sir N. Charles made personal suggestion that he thought that French Government would be willing to listen to any reasonable proposals put forward by Italian Government.	126
80	SIR A. RYAN Durazzo Tel. No. 30	April 7	Reports that Italian Government's demands were rejected by Albanian Government at 6 p.m. on April 6: situation at 10 p.m. unchanged: preparations for resistance including distribution of arms to civilians continue: rumours of Greek concentration on southern frontier.	127
81	To EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 165	April 7	Refers to No. 83 and records observations made to Signor Crolla regarding anxiety of H.M.G. that no action would be taken by Italian Government which would upset <i>status quo</i> in Mediterranean and thus imperil terms of Anglo-Italian Agreement.	127
82	EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 288	April 7	Refers to No. 77 and reports action taken: M.F.A. stated that Italian Government fully intended to respect integrity of Albania and <i>status quo</i> of Mediterranean area and gave reasons for action at present being taken by Italian Government.	128
83	To EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 167	April 7	Refers to No. 81 and transmits text of Signor Mussolini's message to Prime Minister assuring him that solution of Italo-Albanian question would take place in such a form as not to provoke a crisis in Anglo-Italian relations or international situation in general.	129
84	To SIR S. WATERLOW Athens Tel. No. 85 To SIR R. CAMPBELL Belgrade Tel. No. 70	April 7	Instructions to ask Government to which accredited, in view of isolation of H.M. Minister at Durazzo, to keep H.M.G. informed of latest facts as to situation in Albania.	129

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
	To SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 75 To MR. RENDEL Sofia Tel. No. 41			
85	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 152	April 7	Refers to No. 78 and reports that in view of Italian attack on Albania no action being taken for the present on instructions contained in No. 79: reports views of M. Bonnet on reasons for action of Italy in Albania: states that M. Bonnet, despite Albanian affair, remains anxious to compose with Italy.	130
86	To EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 168	April 7	Instructions regarding representations to be made to Italian Government concerning Italian action in Albania.	131
87	To SIR R. CAMPBELL Belgrade Tel. No. 63 To SIR S. WATERLOW Athens Tel. No. 80	April 7	Refers to Nos. 72 and 75 and requests views as to immediate reaction and likely attitude of Yugoslav and Greek Governments.	132
88	To EARL OF PERTH Rome No. 524	April 7	Records representations made by Italian Chargé d'Affaires on April 5 concerning terms of Reuter communique of April 4 regarding possible Italian action in Albania: explanation given by Signor Crolla of present position between Italian and Albanian Governments.	132
89	EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. Unnumbered	April 8	Refers to No. 86 and asks whether in view of No. 82 it is desired to modify in any way terms of No. 86.	135
90	To EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 170	April 8	Refers to No. 82 and transmits instructions regarding representations to be made to Italian Government regarding sudden invasion of Albania: instructions contained in No. 86 should be cancelled.	135
91	SIR S. WATERLOW Athens Tel. No. 113	April 8	Reports arrival of King Zog at Florina morning of April 8 without warning accompanied by his Prime Minister and other Albanian officials: Greek Government greatly embarrassed and annoyed at development.	136
92	To SIR E. PHIPPS Paris No. 836	April 8	Records conversation with French Ambassador regarding events in Albania: attitude of Yugoslavia and question of what action, if any, should be taken by French and British Governments discussed.	136
93	To SIR S. WATERLOW Athens No. 124	April 8	Records information from Greek Minister regarding situation in Albania: Albanians reported to be offering desperate resistance to Italians and battle raging in Durazzo.	138

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
94 To SIR A. RYAN Durazzo No. 42	April 8	Records conversation with Albanian Minister who presented Note from his Government appealing for aid of H.M.G. in defence of Albania: M. Kurti informed of statement of Count Ciano that Italian Government would respect independence and integrity of Albania.	138
95 To EARL OF PERTH Rome No. 533	April 8	Records comments of Signor Mussolini, as received from Italian Chargé d'Affaires, justifying Italian action in Albania: considers that Italian Government anxious to avoid rupture of relations with H.M.G.	140
96 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris	April 8	Letter to Sir A. Cadogan transmitting information given to H.M. Minister in Paris by M. Léger regarding rumours of further Italian <i>coup</i> : Tunis, Corfu, Egypt, and Gibraltar mentioned as possible points of attack.	143
97 SIR S. WATERLOW Athens Tels. Nos. 115 and 116	April 9	Reports information from Greek Prime Minister that, according to Greek Military Attaché at Rome, Italians intend to attack Corfu between April 10 and April 12: Prime Minister said he had made all preparations to resist to utmost.	145
98 To EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 175	April 9	Refers to No. 97 and asks for comments of Service Attachés on information contained therein.	145
99 To EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 177	April 9	Refers to No. 101: instructions to inform Count Ciano of conversations of Secretary of State with Italian Chargé d'Affaires: stresses importance of there being no possibility of misunderstanding as to attitude of H.M.G. in event of Italian action against Corfu or any other Greek territory.	145
100 To SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 139	April 9	Instructions to inform M. Bonnet and if possible M. Daladier simultaneously of conversations of Secretary of State with Italian Chargé d'Affaires as contained in No. 101: states attitude of H.M.G. should Italy attack Greece and asks report urgently whether French Government would be disposed to take similar view and action.	146
101 To EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 176	April 9	Summarizes conversations with Italian Chargé d'Affaires who called to convey messages from Signor Mussolini regarding calmness of Yugoslavia and Greece, Italian intentions in Albania, withdrawal of Italian troops from Spain and Anglo-Italian relations: Signor Crolla warned that H.M. Government would take serious view of Italian occupation of Corfu which Greek Government had some reason to anticipate.	146

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
102	To H.M. REPRESENTATIVES Angora Athens Belgrade Sofia Bucharest Warsaw	April 9	Instructions to communicate to Government to which accredited a summary of paragraphs 1 to 7 of No. 101 for their confidential information.	148
103	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 155	April 9	Refers to No. 100 and reports action taken: M. Daladier stated that French Government entirely approved of attitude of H.M.G. and would join with Great Britain in helping Greece to resist should any part of her territory be attacked by Italy.	148
104	EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 304	April 9	Refers to No. 90 and reports conversation with M.F.A. regarding Italian action in Albania and future intentions. Count Ciano informed that visits of H.M. Ships to Italian ports would be brought to an end forthwith.	149
105	To SIR S. WATERLOW Athens Tel. No. 99	April 9	Instructions to inform Greek Government of message received from Signor Mussolini, through Italian Chargé d'Affaires, that Greek Government had been assured that all rumours concerning Italian hostile intentions were false and that Italy intended to respect territorial and insular integrity of Greece.	151
106	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 156	April 9	Reports information from M. Daladier that he had good reason to believe that Albanian <i>coup</i> was merely prelude to big Italo-German offensive from North Sea to Egypt: reports defensive measures being taken by French Government and fears of M. Bonnet and M. Daladier regarding Gibraltar and Egypt.	151
107	EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 308	April 9	Refers to No. 101 and reports information from M.F.A. that Italian Chargé d'Affaires had received instructions to convey to Secretary of State formal assurances from Signor Mussolini regarding Italian attitude towards Greece and withdrawal of Italian troops from Spain: Count Ciano expressed himself as greatly pleased with conversations of Signor Crolla with Secretary of State.	152
108	EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 309	April 9	Considers that in view of information contained in No. 107 no action is necessary on instructions contained in No. 99.	153
109	To EARL OF PERTH Rome No. 535	April 9	Records fuller account of conversation with Italian Chargé d'Affaires on April 9 summarized in No. 101.	153

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
110	TO EARL OF PERTH Rome No. 534	April 9	Records further conversation with Italian Chargé d'Affaires who called with another message from Signor Mussolini covering (a) withdrawal of Italian troops from Spain; (b) assurances given to Greek Government of intention of Italian Government to respect territorial and insular integrity of Greece; (c) appreciation of Signor Mussolini for cordial attitude of H.M.G. M. Crolla expressed view that it would be most useful to Signor Mussolini to have some assurance that Anglo-Italian Agreement would remain in force.	155
111	TO SIR S. WATERLOW Athens No. 129	April 9	Records conversation with Greek Minister regarding possible Italian attack on Corfu: M. Simopoulos stated that Greek Government would resist by arms any Italian attack and would be glad to know attitude which H.M.G. intended to follow.	157
112	TO SIR S. WATERLOW Athens No. 130	April 9	Records information given to Greek Minister regarding Secretary of State's conversation with Italian Chargé d'Affaires and assurances given by latter: M. Simopoulos suggested that Secretary of State should consider desirability of saying something to Bulgarian Government in case they thought of taking advantage of present situation.	158
113	EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 310	April 10	Refers to No. 98 and transmits observations asked for.	159
114	SIR S. WATERLOW Athens Tel. No. 118	April 10	Reports that Italian Chargé d'Affaires gave to Greek Government on April 9 message from Signor Mussolini thanking Greek Government for their attitude regarding King Zog and speaking of desire of Italy for good relations with Greece.	160
115	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 158	April 10	Refers to No. 106 and reports information from M. Bonnet regarding mobilization in Italy: German troop movements reported as taking place towards Poland: M. Bonnet again expressed anxiety regarding intention of H.M.G. to send ships to Far East.	160
116	TO SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 142	April 10	Refers to No. 99 and states reasons why instructions contained therein have been cancelled.	160
117	SIR S. WATERLOW Athens Tel. No. 119	April 10	Refers to No. 105 and reports that Greek Prime Minister has been informed of contents thereof.	161
118	SIR S. WATERLOW Athens Tel. No. 122	April 10	Transmits text of memorandum handed to Greek Prime Minister by Italian Chargé d'Affaires assuring Greek Government of intention of Italian Government to respect territorial and insular integrity of Greece.	161

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
119	SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 108	April 10	Refers to No. 102 and reports action taken: states that M.F.A. appeared to have doubts about firmness of attitude of H.M.G. and asks for permission to acquaint him with substance of No. 103: M.F.A. mentioned rumour of Italian designs on Crete.	162
120	SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 109	April 10	Refers to No. 119 and reports that French colleague agrees that there is an element of hesitation in M.F.A.'s present attitude which can only be removed by categorical statement as to where H.M.G. and French Government stand in regard to Italian threat to Greece.	162
121	SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 111	April 10	Reports information from French Ambassador that M.F.A. was extremely disappointed by communication made to him as instructed in No. 102; considers, and French Ambassador agrees, that it is essential that M.F.A. should be given something much more definite and encouraging.	163
122	MR. INGRAM Foreign Office	April 10	Minute recording conversation with Greek Minister regarding Italian assurances to Greek Government.	163
123	TO EARL OF PERTH Rome No. 544	April 10	Records conversation with Italian Chargé d'Affaires who called to say that Duce had no objection to assurances and communications made by himself being used by H.M.G. in debate in Parliament: Signor Crolla informed of bad impression made on Cabinet and public by events in Albania; nevertheless it was still desire of H.M.G. to collaborate with Italian Government in work of peace.	164
124	SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 112	April 10	Discusses disappointment of M.F.A. at what he considers failure of H.M.G. to give a strong lead in face of events in Albania and possible Italian threat to Greece: suggests action which might be taken to reassure M.F.A.	164
125	TO SIR S. WATERLOW Athens Tel. No. 105	April 11	States that Signor Mussolini has no objection to assurances he has given being used by H.M.G. in debate in House on April 13 and requests that Greek Government be asked if they will agree to use being made, if necessary, of memorandum handed to Greek Government by Italian Chargé d'Affaires in Athens (see No. 118).	165
126	TO SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 91	April 11	Refers to Nos. 119-121 and requests inform M.F.A. that instructions will be sent evening of April 11 which Secretary of State hopes will set his mind at rest.	166
127	TO SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 144	April 11	Instructions to inform French Government of approach being made to Turkish Government (No. 128) regarding question of guarantee to Greece and to ask them whether they concur and would be disposed to make similar communication to Turkish M.F.A.	166

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
128	To SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 92	April 11	Instructions to inform Turkish M.F.A. that H.M.G. contemplate giving an assurance to Greek Government that should action be taken against Greece which threatened her independence, H.M.G. would lend her all support in their power, and enquire whether Turkish Government would be disposed to do likewise.	167
129	SIR A. RYAN Durazzo Tel. No. 37	April 11	Reports that proceedings of Italians are wholly inconsistent with any idea that they are concerned for independence of Albania: comments on situation.	168
130	To SIR R. LINDSAY Washington No. 347	April 11	Records conversation with U.S. Ambassador regarding general international situation: Mr. Kennedy informed that statement would shortly be made in Parliament regarding question of assurance from H.M.G. of support for Greece with which it was hoped it would be possible to associate both French and Turkish Governments: Mr. Kennedy informed that if U.S. Government was indeed proposing to move U.S. fleet back to Pacific, this would be of value.	169
131	EARL OF PERTH Rome No. 308	April 11	Reports information from Greek Chargé d'Affaires regarding assurances of friendship received from Italian Government.	170
132	EARL OF PERTH Rome No. 312	April 11	Transmits record of conversation which Military Attaché had with his French colleague regarding Italian mobilization and future plans. Discusses situation and regrets that it has not been possible for Franco-Italian conversations to have been initiated.	170
133	SIR A. RYAN Durazzo	April 11	Letter to Mr. Ingram describing course of events leading up to occupation of Albania by Italian troops.	174
134	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 159	April 12	Refers to Nos. 127 and 128 and reports agreement of French Government to communication to Turkish Government: French Ambassador at Angora has been instructed to make similar representations: reports advice given to M. Bonnet when he mentioned possibility of M. Daladier making some public statement about French assistance to Roumania.	178
135	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 161	April 12	Reports that French Government contemplate making public statement on April 13: French Ambassador will be instructed to consult Secretary of State regarding its terms, time of issue, &c.	178
136	To SIR S. WATERLOW Athens Tel. No. 110	April 12	Refers to No. 128 and sends instructions to inform Greek Government of text of declaration which H.M.G. propose to make in Parliament on April 13 with which French Government concur: they should also be informed that H.M.G. are in closest touch with Turkish Government.	179

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
137 To SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 148	April 12	Instructions to inform French Government of further approach which is being made to Turkish Government as outlined in No. 138 and to ask them whether they concur and would be disposed to make a communication similar to that contained in paragraphs 4 and 6.	179
138 To SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 98	April 12	Sets forth considerations to be put before Turkish Government with object of creating strongest barrier by greatest number of States to expansionist aims of Axis: H.M.G. prepared in principle to come to help of Turkey in event of threat by Italy to independence of Turkey in Mediterranean area, provided that Turkish Government prepared to come to help of H.M.G. in event of latter being involved in war with Italy: requests that M.F.A. be asked for his views regarding probable attitude of Bulgaria.	179
139 To EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 192	April 12	Instructions to inform M.F.A. that Prime Minister in his statement in House on April 13 will hope to make use of recent assurances given to H.M.G. by Italian Government of their peaceful intentions: M.F.A. should also be informed that declaration will be made by Prime Minister guaranteeing Greece against any attack threatening her independence.	181
140 SIR S. WATERLOW Athens Tel. No. 129	April 12	Refers to No. 136 and reports gratitude of Greek Government for action taken by H.M.G.: only request which Greek Prime Minister has to make is that care should be taken not to give impression that declaration had been made as result of previous agreement with Greece.	182
141 EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 322	April 12	Reports that text of Italian communication to Greek Government is published in press of April 12, together with reply of Greek Government: 'Giornale d'Italia' observes that Greece has no need of compromising guarantees from distant countries.	182
142 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 162	April 12	Refers to No. 137 and reports that M.F.A. agrees and will immediately instruct French Ambassador to concert with H.M. Ambassador in Angora in making desired communication to Turkish Government.	183
143 To SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 149	April 12	Refers to No. 134 and asks whether French Government agree that Prime Minister should refer to their concurrence in terms of last sentence of declaration as telegraphed in paragraph 6 of No. 128.	183
144 To SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 150	April 12	Puts forward considerations to be communicated to French Government asking them to omit reference to Roumania in their declaration to be issued on April 13 guaranteeing Greece.	183

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
145	TO SIR S. WATERLOW Athens No. 144	April 12	Transmits copy of message from Greek Prime Minister, delivered by Greek Minister, thanking H.M.G. for their intervention, results of which had been more efficacious than Greek Government could have expected: transmits also text of declaration to be made in House assuring Greece of support of H.M.G. in any attack on her independence.	185
146	SIR S. WATERLOW Athens Tel. No. 130	April 13	Refers to No. 140 and reports that Greek Government are somewhat perturbed by article in 'Giornale d'Italia' (see No. 141).	186
147	SIR S. WATERLOW Athens Tel. No. 131	April 13	Reports reply given to German Minister on April 12 by Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs when he asked whether there was any question of a British guarantee to Greece.	186
148	EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 324	April 13	Refers to No. 139 and reports action taken.	187
149	SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 119	April 13	Refers to No. 128 and reports reasons why Turkish Government do not feel able at present to commit themselves to public statement in sense desired.	187
150	EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 325	April 13	Reports that communication, based on instructions in No. 139, was handed to M.F.A.'s Chef de Cabinet at 9.30 a.m. on April 13: Signor Anfuso said that <i>aide-mémoire</i> would reach Duce immediately and that Count Ciano should have it on his return.	188
151	SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 123	April 13	Reports that Turkish Government agree to inclusion in statement in Parliament that Turkish Government were informed on April 12 of intention of H.M.G. to make declaration in respect of Greece.	188
152	SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 122	April 13	Refers to No. 138 and reports enquiry from M.F.A. why guarantee offered by H.M.G. only covered Italy and did not mention Germany: asks for information as to whether threat to Turkey from Germany is definitely covered.	188
153	SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 120	April 13	Refers to Nos. 128 and 149 and transmits translation of reply received from Turkish Government.	189
154	TO SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 155	April 13	Refers to Nos. 106 and 115 and states that Naval Attaché is returning to Paris with explanation in general terms of real facts of situation and will be communicating them to French Naval Staff on April 13.	189

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
155	To SIR H. KNATCHBULL-HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 106	April 13	Refers to No. 152: instructions to inform M.F.A. that a direct guarantee to Turkey as against Germany would naturally follow if Turkey agreed to guarantee Roumania: H.M.G. would expect that Turkey for her part would reciprocate by guaranteeing United Kingdom against Germany.	190
156	CAPTAIN BOWYER-SMYTH Naval Attaché Rome	April 13	Report to Earl of Perth on visit to Durazzo and Tirana: description, based on account of eye-witnesses, of Italian landing.	190
157	SIR H. KNATCHBULL-HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 128	April 14	Refers to Nos. 60 and 155 and reports that Turkish Government will examine proposals and answer will be given in due course: M.F.A. said it could be assumed in principle that Turkish Government were in agreement.	194
158	SIR H. KNATCHBULL-HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 131	April 14	Refers to No. 124 and reports that in conversation described in No. 157 M.F.A. mentioned subject of material co-operation in war.	194
159	SIR A. RYAN Durazzo No. 45	April 14	Transmits account of events leading up to Italian occupation of Albania and views on present situation.	195

CHAPTER III

The European situation: Italy, Turkey and the Balkans: correspondence with the French and Soviet Governments with regard to proposals for checking further German aggression. (April 14-21, 1939.)

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
160	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 107	April 14	Reports that Prime Minister's announcement of guarantees to Greece and Roumania has been well received and quotes text of statement issued by Ministry of Foreign Affairs.	198
161	SIR W. SEEDS Moscow Tel. No. 63	April 14	Refers to No. 52 and suggests action which French Government might take to persuade Polish and Roumanian Governments to be willing to accept help from Soviet Government if necessary.	198
162	To SIR H. KNATCHBULL-HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 111	April 14	Refers to No. 63 regarding decision to bring Bulgaria into Balkan Entente and expresses appreciation of Turkish M.F.A.'s initiative: H.M.G. would be ready to give any assistance possible.	199
163	SIR G. OGILVIE-FORBES Berlin Tel. No. 286	April 14	Reports information that German Government are contemplating securing return of Danzig to Reich by April 20: certain military circles are said to be of opinion that if Herr Hitler provoked world war over Danzig his Government would collapse: transmits comments thereon with which Military Attaché agrees.	199

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
164 SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 110	April 14	Refers to No. 50 and reports assurance of M.F.A. of reciprocal help of Polish Government should H.M.G. become involved in war with Germany in defence of minor Western Powers. M. Beck suggested that Staff conversations should be initiated to consider problems involved.	200
165 SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 108	April 14	Reports observations of M.F.A. regarding British guarantee to Roumania which, speaking unofficially, he felt had been mistake. M. Beck stated that he would continue his conversations with Roumanian Government but he understood that Roumanian Ambassador had brought proposals from Bucharest which Polish Government could not accept. M. Beck said he was exercising all possible pressure on Hungarian Government to adopt less hostile attitude towards Roumania.	200
166 To SIR W. SEEDS Moscow Tel. No. 70	April 14	Summarizes conversation with Soviet Ambassador who stated that Soviet Government were prepared to take part in giving assistance to Roumania: M. Maisky informed of instructions being sent in No. 170.	201
167 SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 109	April 14	Reports assurance of M.F.A. that he is fully alive to necessity of offering no provocation to Germany: M. Beck stated that he had impression German Government were for moment uncertain what attitude to take up regarding Danzig: no further military measures being taken at present by Polish Government.	203
168 SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 111	April 14	Transmits message from Military Attaché to War Office giving Deputy Chief of Second Bureau's estimate of groupings of German troops.	203
169 SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 112	April 14	Refers to No. 161 and transmits views regarding Polish attitude towards acceptance of Soviet help.	204
170 To SIR W. SEEDS Moscow Tel. No. 71	April 14	Instructions regarding approach to be made to M. Litvinov suggesting that Soviet Government make public declaration stating that in event of any act of aggression against any European neighbour of Soviet Union, which was resisted by country concerned, assistance of Soviet Union would be available if desired.	205
171 To SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 118	April 14	Instructions to inform Turkish Government of contents of Nos. 166 and 170 and to state that in view of friendly relations of Turkish Government with Soviet Government, H.M.G. do not doubt that they will sympathize and approve.	206

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
172	To SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 160	April 14	Instructions to inform French Government of contents of Nos. 166 and 170 and to ask them whether they would be prepared to use analogous language at Moscow.	207
173	To SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 119	April 14	States that Roumanian Minister, in course of interview with Sir A. Cadogan, said that both M. Cretzianu and M. Gafencu were personally in favour of some concessions to Bulgaria so as to bring her into orbit of Balkan Entente.	207
174	To SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 105 To SIR R. HOARE Bucharest Tel. No. 129	April 14	States that Nos. 166 and 170 are being repeated for information only.	208
175	MR. ASHTON-GWATKIN Foreign Office	April 14	Minute recording conversation with Soviet Ambassador regarding visit of Russian Delegation to London to continue trade discussions begun in Moscow.	208
176	To SIR W. SEEDS Moscow No. 284	April 14	Records at greater length conversation with Soviet Ambassador summarized in No. 166.	209
177	SIR G. OGILVIE-FORBES Berlin Tel. No. 290	April 15	Reports that Military Attaché has been informed by Polish Military Attaché that agreement between Germany and Hungary by which Germany undertakes military protection of Hungary, will be announced on Herr Hitler's birthday.	210
178	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 113	April 15	Reports information from French Ambassador regarding his conversation with M.F.A. on April 14. M. Beck somewhat upset by report of German-Hungarian military alliance, but repeated his arguments regarding guarantee to Roumania: summarizes views of French Ambassador on M. Beck's attitude.	211
179	MR. SHEPHERD Danzig Tel. No. 35	April 15	Reports comments made to U.S. colleague by head of Foreign Section of Danzig Senate regarding Anglo-Polish defence pact: Dr. Böttcher stated that Germany would probably regard Anglo-Polish staff talks as violation of German-Polish pact.	211
180	SIR R. LINDSAY Washington Tel. No. 179	April 15	Transmits text of message sent on April 14 by President to Herr Hitler and by Secretary of State to Signor Mussolini.	212
181	MR. ORDE Riga Tel. No. 7	April 15	Reports information from M.F.A. regarding recent <i>démarche</i> by Soviet Government on question of any voluntary or forced alienation of Latvian independence.	214
182	SIR W. SEEDS Moscow Tel. No. 65	April 15	Refers to No. 170 and reports that M. Litvinov gave proposal friendly hearing and promised to consult his Government. M. Litvinov stated that French Government had started conversations with Soviet Ambassador at Paris as regard mutual military assistance.	215

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
183	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 169	April 15	Refers to No. 172 and reports information from M.F.A. regarding suggestion made to Soviet Ambassador that Annex should be added to Franco-Soviet Pact whereby Russia would undertake to come to assistance of France in certain circumstances: M. Bonnet stated, however, that he preferred proposal of Secretary of State regarding declaration and would so inform Soviet Ambassador and instruct French Ambassador at Moscow as desired.	216
184	SIR G. OGILVIE-FORBES Berlin Tel. No. 295	April 15	Comments on danger points in present international situation as viewed from Berlin—German idea of encirclement, anti-aggression pact with Turkey, and attitude of Poles regarding Danzig and Corridor.	216
185	SIR R. HOARE Bucharest Tel. No. 127	April 15	Suggests that Roumanian M.F.A. be given, through H.M. Chargé d'Affaires at Berlin, outline of state of discussions with Soviet Government.	217
186	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 171	April 15	Refers to No. 183 and reports that M.F.A., after talking to President of Council and Soviet Ambassador, said that original French suggestion might have been preferable, but they will nevertheless instruct their Ambassador at Moscow in sense desired by H.M.G.	217
187	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 114	April 15	Reports terms of Roumanian proposal to Polish Government with which M.F.A. did not agree: M. Beck hopes to travel with Roumanian M.F.A. on his way through Poland on April 17 and will endeavour to reach some understanding.	217
188	PRIME MINISTER SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS	April 15	Text of communiqué issued to Press regarding President Roosevelt's message to Herr Hitler and Signor Mussolini (see No. 180).	218
189	EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 342	April 16	Transmits extract from speech on Albanian question by M.F.A. on April 15 in Chamber, in which he referred to Mr. Chamberlain's speech of April 13.	219
190	SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 134	April 16	Transmits observations on Turkish reply (see No. 199).	219
191	SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 135	April 16	Reports confirmation by M.F.A. that Turkish reply amounted to promise of support in all eventualities contemplated in No. 138 except that if Great Britain were attacked in West only and not in Mediterranean Turkey would remain neutral.	220
192	To SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 121	April 16	Refers to No. 63 and asks for information regarding negotiation of entry of Bulgaria into Balkan Entente.	221

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
193	SIR W. SEEDS Moscow Tel. No. 66	April 17	Refers to No. 182 and reports request of M. Litvinov for reply to enquiry made by M. Maisky regarding nature of assistance which would be required from various Powers concerned for protection of Roumania: Soviet Government would require an answer before considering declaration as proposed by H.M.G.	221
194	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 173	April 17	Reports views of M.F.A. regarding international situation and his suggestion that Sir P. Loraine should be sent to Rome as soon as possible: French Government ready to make reasonable concessions to Italy over Suez Canal and Jibuti, &c.	222
195	MR. SNOW Helsingfors Tel. Unnumbered	April 17	Stresses fact that Soviet offer to assist Finland, however phrased, would be most unwelcome to Finns.	223
196	SIR W. SEEDS Moscow Tel. No. 68	April 17	Summarizes position regarding negotiations as it would appear from Soviet angle, which accounts for M. Litvinov's question whether Britain would declare war in case of armed aggression or only lodge protest or not even that.	223
197	TO SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 109	April 17	Refers to No. 163: instructions to inform M. Beck of report regarding German Government's plan for return of Danzig to Reich by Herr Hitler's birthday and to ask M.F.A. whether Polish Government would not consider it well to show disposition to negotiate with Germany now concerning Danzig.	224
198	TO SIR E. PHIPPS Paris No. 919	April 17	Records conversation of French Ambassador with Sir A. Cadogan regarding British consultation with Soviet Government: account given by M. Corbin of enquiries made of Soviet Government by French Government regarding question of Soviet assistance for Poland and Roumania.	225
199	SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora No. 201	April 17	Transmits copy of letter from M.F.A. enclosing Turkish proposals for collaboration with Great Britain in event of war.	225
200	SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 137	April 18	Reports that local news agency produces report of Press Association that Prime Minister will announce adherence of Turkey to anti-aggression pact in statement in House on April 18: M.F.A. asks that any statement by Prime Minister may be limited to general reference to sympathy and good relations which exist between two countries.	227
201	SIR W. SEEDS Moscow Tel. No. 69	April 18	Transmits proposals of Soviet Government regarding mutual assistance against aggression.	228

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
202	SIR A. RYAN Durazzo Tel. No. 51	April 18	Reports joint action which French, Greek, Turkish, and U.S. Ministers decided to take in expressing to respective Governments complete disbelief in account given by Italian M.F.A., in speech of April 15, of events leading up to Italian occupation of Albania.	229
203	SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 138	April 18	Transmits text of oral communication made to M.F.A. by French Ambassador regarding question of guarantees to Greece and Roumania, and offer of reciprocal guarantee to Turkey.	230
204	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 116	April 18	Asks Sir A. Cadogan whether considered views on No. 201 required: states that Soviet proposals seem most objectionable from point of view of Polish Government and any idea that such proposals had even been put forward would be liable to jeopardize possibility of Polish-Soviet co-operation.	231
205	SIR G. OGILVIE-FORBES Berlin Tel. No. 310	April 18	Refers to No. 197 and transmits views on present position as between Polish and German Governments regarding Danzig problem.	231
206	SIR G. OGILVIE-FORBES Berlin Tel. No. 313	April 18	Reports information from Belgian Ambassador regarding terms said to have been offered by German Government to Polish Government regarding Danzig: Soviet Ambassador informed by State Secretary that no progress was being made in negotiations regarding Danzig owing to Polish opposition: asks whether he should approach State Secretary on subject.	232
207	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 118	April 18	Refers to No. 187 and reports information from M.F.A. regarding his conversation with Roumanian M.F.A. on April 17: agreement reached that in event of signs of German or other aggression conversations should immediately take place with view to considering common action two countries should take.	233
208	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 117	April 18	Refers to No. 197 and reports M.F.A.'s comments on possibility of German <i>coup</i> in Danzig before Herr Hitler's birthday: in all circumstances M. Beck felt it was inopportune to make any further movement for moment and preferred to await return of German Ambassador before reverting to subject.	233
209	TO SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 111	April 18	Refers to No. 164: instructions to thank M.F.A. for his communication and to state that views of H.M.G. regarding Staff conversations will be made known to him shortly.	234
210	TO SIR E. PHIPPS Paris No. 945	April 18	Records conversation with French Ambassador regarding reply of Soviet Government to Franco-British proposals.	234

XXX

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
211 To SIR W. SEEDS Moscow No. 291	April 18	Records conversation of Soviet Ambassador with Sir A. Cadogan on March 29 regarding request of H.M.G. for deletion of references to political matters in communiqué issued on conclusion of visit to Moscow of Secretary of Department of Overseas Trade.	235
212 To SIR S. WATERLOW Athens No. 155	April 18	Records conversation with Greek Minister when M. Simopoulos called to express thanks of Greek Government for declarations made by Prime Minister and Secretary of State regarding Greece.	236
213 SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw	April 18	Letter to Sir A. Cadogan pointing out damage done by apparently unnecessary publicity given through French, British, and American press and B.B.C. to discussions of H.M.G. with U.S.S.R.	236
214 EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 362	April 19	Transmits views of person in contact with prominent political circles regarding Italy's unwillingness to go to war with United Kingdom. Urges that French Government should make some approach to Italian Government regarding Italy's claims against France as French attitude to Italy may well be key to situation.	237
215 SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 146	April 19	Reports that French Ambassador, in view of pessimistic reports from Berlin, has telegraphed to Paris pointing out extreme urgency of completing arrangements and indeed transporting whatever forces and material are necessary for co-operation with Turkey.	238
216 SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 120	April 19	Refers to No. 209 and reports information from M.F.A.'s Chef de Cabinet that countries in respect of which Poland's reciprocal assurance applied were Holland, Denmark, and Belgium.	238
217 SIR R. HOARE Bucharest Tel. No. 133	April 19	Reports reply of Roumanian Government to German Chargé d'Affaires' inquiry whether Roumanian Government had previous knowledge of President Roosevelt's message and whether they felt themselves threatened by Germany.	239
218 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 176	April 19	Reports information from President of Council regarding steps being taken by French Government to show Herr Hitler that they were in earnest: M. Daladier urged that H.M.G. should adopt at once some form of national compulsory service.	239
219 To SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 126	April 19	Comments on Nos. 190, 191, and 199 and suggests alteration in wording of public declaration which Turkish Government are willing to make, so as to make it clear that in event of an act of aggression leading to war in the Mediterranean or in the Balkans, Turkey would abandon her neutrality in favour of Allies.	240

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
220	To SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 172	April 19	Instructions to inform French Government that H.M.G. are considering latest Soviet proposal as contained in No. 201, and to ask them not to send any reply to it without consulting H.M.G.: enquires whether there is any more detailed information about French proposal than that contained in No. 183.	243
221	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 37 Saving	April 19	Refers to No. 206 and reports comments of M. Beck's Chef de Cabinet on German reports of Polish intransigence over Danzig: untrue that Poland was refusing to negotiate.	243
222	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 38 Saving	April 19	Mentions further reason why Poland would dislike to be associated with U.S.S.R. in guarantee pact and submits that as Poland will be in forefront of battle, if worst occurs, her susceptibilities should be borne in mind.	244
223	SIR G. OGILVIE-FORBES Berlin No. 457	April 19	Reports conversation with Prince Bismarck of Ministry of Foreign Affairs on April 17 on general situation. Prince Bismarck alleged complete ignorance of Herr Hitler's future intentions and complained of Britain's encirclement policy: reports comments of Prince Bismarck regarding withdrawal of British Ambassador.	244
224	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw No. 104	April 19	Transmits three memoranda by Military Attaché regarding military defensibility of Poland's western frontier and French Naval Attaché's estimation of use to which Polish Navy could be put in event of war with Germany.	245
225	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris	April 19	Letter to Sir O. Sargent reporting observations of M. Léger to H.M. Minister regarding best way of securing moderate German answer to Mr. Roosevelt's message and policy to be followed by French and British Governments.	250
226	EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 369	April 20	Reports observations of Signor Buti of Ministry of Foreign Affairs to First Secretary of Embassy regarding Franco-Italian relations which, he said, Italians were beginning to feel were hopeless.	250
227	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 178	April 20	Reports reply of U.S. Ambassador to M. Daladier's suggestion that U.S. Atlantic fleet should visit European ports: M. Bullitt, speaking privately, stated that President felt very strongly that H.M.G. should introduce compulsory military service at once and before April 28.	251
228	EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 375	April 20	Refers to No. 214 and reports that French Ambassador agrees that relations between France and Italy are probably key to situation: M. François-Poncet expressed strong hope that H.M.G. would urge M. Daladier to open negotiations with Italian Government.	252

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
229 To H.M. REPRESENTATIVES Angora Athens Belgrade Berne Brussels Bucharest Copenhagen The Hague Helsingfors Oslo Riga Stockholm	April 20	States that German Government are trying to extort from smaller countries assurances that they do not feel threatened by Germany. Requests that public statements or press comments expressing apprehension in regard to intentions of Germany or Italy be telegraphed urgently so that they may be used in B.B.C. German broadcasts.	252
230 MR. SNOW Helsingfors Tel. No. 31	April 20	Reports negative reply of M.F.A. to questions put to him by German Minister asking whether there had been any prior consultation between U.S. and Finland before recent message of President of United States to Herr Hitler and Signor Mussolini and whether Finland feared attack from Germany.	253
231 MR. SNOW Helsingfors Tel. No. 29	April 20	Reports M.F.A.'s views regarding Soviet offer of help against aggression to neighbouring States stated in press to have been broadcast from April 17-19; Finnish Government would reject offer if officially presented.	253
232 To SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 175	April 20	Refers to No. 220 and states that H.M.G. would be glad to be informed of views of French Government at their earliest convenience.	254
233 To SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 113	April 20	Records information given to Polish Ambassador regarding progress of negotiations with Soviet Government.	254
234 To SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 114	April 20	Records conversation with Polish Ambassador who said he had gained impression that Anglo-Polish arrangement had had a conciliatory effect in Berlin: in reply to question regarding Danzig, Ambassador said he did not believe negotiations were being actively pursued, but that M. Beck desired reasonable settlement and would do his best to obtain one.	254
235 To EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 213	April 20	Refers to No. 214 and indicates lines on which Signor Mussolini should be approached regarding question of Italian claims against France.	255
236 SIR R. CLIVE Brussels Tel. No. 21	April 20	Reports negative reply of M.F.A. to questions put to him by German Ambassador (1) whether Belgium feared an attack from Germany and (2) whether Belgian Government had prior knowledge of President Roosevelt's communication to Herr Hitler and Signor Mussolini.	256

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
237	To SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 115	April 20	Refers to No. 208 and points out that although there may be no outbreak at Danzig within next few days, position is full of dangerous possibilities: stresses necessity of keeping before M. Beck anxiety of H.M.G. regarding situation.	257
238	To SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 176	April 20	Sets forth considerations to be put before French Government in endeavour to persuade them to re-establish contact with Italian Government.	257
239	SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 147	April 20	Reports that substance of No. 219 has been conveyed to M.F.A. who raised following points: (1) necessity of keeping Soviet Government informed, and (2) importance which Turkey attached to certainty of material assistance from H.M.G. in regard to defence of Straits.	259
240	To SIR E. PHIPPS Paris No. 981	April 20	Records conversation of French Ambassador with Sir A. Cadogan regarding reply to be sent to Soviet proposals.	260
241	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris	April 20	Letter to Sir O. Sargent referring to No. 220 and informing him of conversation of H.M. Minister with M. Léger about negotiations with Russia. Secretary-General gave details of French proposals to Soviet Union and Soviet reply, and discussed response to be made to Soviet proposals. M. Léger emphasized importance of getting as many negotiations as possible concluded before April 28 and urged importance of adoption by H.M.G. of conscription before that date.	260
242	EARL OF PERTH Rome Tel. No. 384	April 21	Refers to No. 235 and reports conversation with Signor Mussolini who stated that French Government knew quite well what Italian claims were: in view of what had passed Italian Government were waiting for French Government to take initiative in entering into negotiations with them.	262
243	SIR G. OGILVIE-FORBES Berlin Tel. No. 315	April 21	Reports information from Roumanian Minister regarding M. Gafencu's interview with Herr Hitler: M. Gafencu very satisfied with result in so far as German-Roumanian relations were concerned.	264
244	To SIR G. OGILVIE- FORBES Berlin Tel. No. 128	April 21	Refers to Nos. 206 and 237: instructions to say nothing for present to State Secretary lest by doing so Polish position is weakened.	265
245	To SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 116	April 21	Refers to No. 216 and points out that no mention is made of Switzerland: asks whether latter country is not to be included within scope of Polish Government's undertaking.	265

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
246 To SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 153 Saving	April 21	States that immediately following telegram contains first draft of instructions it is proposed to send to H.M. Ambassador at Moscow conveying observations upon Soviet proposals reported in No. 201: instructions to let M. Bonnet know privately contents of telegram and ask for his comments and lines on which French Government propose to reply.	265
247 To SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 154 Saving	April 21	Refers to No. 246 and transmits draft instructions to H.M. Ambassador, Moscow.	266
248 SIR R. CLIVE Brussels Tel. No. 37 Saving	April 21	Refers to Nos. 229 and 236 and comments on feeling in Belgium with regard to possibility of German aggression: transmits observations from representative newspapers of different political parties which illustrate general attitude.	269
249 SIR R. CLIVE Brussels Tel. No. 38 Saving	April 21	Reports information from Roumanian M.F.A. regarding his interview with Herr Hitler who during great part of time raved against England: Herr Hitler spoke of war and its results, but M. Gafencu had impression that he did not want war.	271
250 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 229 Saving	April 21	Reports that necessity for secrecy regarding Franco-Anglo-Soviet negotiations impressed upon Secretary-General. M. Léger said that French Government had not yet considered Soviet proposals but as soon as they had any views to express they would inform H.M.G.	272
251 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 232 Saving	April 21	Reports that he had quite satisfactory interview with M. Bonnet regarding Franco-Italian relations and hopes to see M. Daladier on April 22.	272
252 MR. STRANG Foreign Office	April 21	Minute embodying observations of Quai d'Orsay on latest Soviet proposals, received from French Embassy.	273

CHAPTER IV

The European situation: visit of the Roumanian Foreign Minister to London, April 23-26: Herr Hitler's speech of April 28: further correspondence with the French and Soviet Governments: Anglo-Turkish negotiations. (April 22-30, 1939.)

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
253 SIR R. CAMPBELL Belgrade Tel. No. 88	April 22	Refers to No. 229 and reports that Yugoslav Government intend to reply in negative to questions asked by German Government (1) whether they felt threatened by Germany and (2) whether they did anything to inspire President Roosevelt's message: no material for B.B.C. broadcasts available.	275

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
254	SIR G. OGILVIE-FORBES Berlin Tel. No. 317	April 22	Reports information from Polish Ambassador regarding present position of negotiations concerning Danzig: last official communication made to German Government by Polish Ambassador on March 26, when he returned reply of Polish Government to German Government's demands.	275
255	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 184	April 22	Refers to No. 251 and reports conversation with M. Daladier regarding Franco-Italian relations and importance of opening conversations with Italian Government on question of Italian claims: M. Daladier promised to give matter his earnest consideration but outlook does not seem hopeful.	276
256	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 185	April 22	Refers to No. 255 and reports point made to M. Daladier that as H.M.G. were about to introduce conscription, it was hoped that French Government would consider their suggestions regarding Franco-Italian contact.	278
257	SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 155	April 22	Refers to No. 258 and states that he will find it easier to act alone and that it will make no difference to Turkish Government, who are aware of close co-operation between himself and his French colleague.	278
258	SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 154	April 22	Refers to No. 219 and reports that French Ambassador is perturbed because he has received no similar instructions and on telegraphing to Quai d'Orsay was informed that they knew nothing about telegram under reference.	279
259	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 186	April 22	Refers to No. 255 and reports that some contact may be sought with Italy but only after Prime Minister's announcement on conscription: suggests date of announcement be advanced to April 25.	279
260	TO SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 131	April 22	Refers to No. 239 and replies to two points raised therein.	279
261	SIR S. WATERLOW Athens Tel. No. 161	April 22	Reports negative reply of Greek Government to questions addressed to them by German Government: (1) whether Greece felt herself threatened by Germany and (2) whether Greek Government authorized or encouraged President Roosevelt to send his message.	280
262	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 123	April 22	Reports that Polish Government have not been approached by German Government in connexion with President Roosevelt's appeal.	280

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
263 SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 122	April 22	Refers to No. 234 and reports representations made to Vice-M.F.A. on subject of Danzig: M. Arciszewski gave details of proposals which had been received from German Government in March and said that Polish Government awaited return of German Ambassador from Berlin in supposition that he might bring proposals of detailed nature.	281
264 SIR W. SEEDS Moscow Tel. No. 73	April 22	Refers to No. 239 and reports that according to Turkish Ambassador, M. Potemkin is leaving on April 22 for Angora on special mission.	282
265 MR. PRESTON Kovno Tel. No. 15 Saving to Riga Tel. No. 27 to F.O.	April 22	Refers to No. 229 and reports that although there have been no public utterances or press comments explicitly stating by whom Lithuania is threatened, it is obvious that she is apprehensive and that danger comes from Germany.	282
266 SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw	April 22	Letter to Sir A. Cadogan urging need for financial and economic help for Poland.	283
267 SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw	April 22	Letter to Sir O. Sargent informing him (1) of report that Japan had declined military alliance with Germany and (2) that Italy at time of Albanian <i>coup</i> had assured Yugoslavia and Bulgaria that if general war resulted, Italy would have no objection to these two countries helping themselves to their territorial <i>desiderata</i> in Greece. Considers there is intensive German campaign to drive wedge between Great Britain and Poland over Danzig and Soviet co-operation.	285
268 SIR G. OGILVIE-FORBES Berlin Tel. No. 319	April 23	Reports information from member of Herr Hitler's personal staff regarding (1) M. Beck's knowledge of German proposals concerning Danzig; (2) Herr Hitler's opinion of M. Beck and President Roosevelt; and (3) Herr Hitler's desire that some prominent personage should come from Great Britain with fluent knowledge of German to have talk with him.	286
269 SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 158	April 23	Reports request of M.F.A. to have views of Secretary of State, if possible before April 25, on (1) exact position of conversations with Soviet Government; (2) position and attitude of Yugoslav Government, especially as likely to be affected by visits of Yugoslav M.F.A. to Venice and Berlin and of Prince Paul to Berlin; and (3) general view as to next probable move of Axis Powers.	287
270 TO SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 182	April 23	Instructions to inform French Government of contents of No. 219 and endeavour to persuade them to instruct their Ambassador in Angora to support H.M. Ambassador's <i>démarche</i> .	287

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
271	SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 159	April 23	Reports that reply of Turkish Government to No. 219 will be given on April 25 or April 26: M.F.A. stated that reply would be 'positive' and would express agreement in principle: reports explanation regarding supposed desire of Turkish Government for public statement and secret agreement: Turkish Government suggest 15 years as period of duration of alliance when reached and would be glad to know H.M.G.'s views regarding this.	288
272	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 125	April 23	Reports reply of M.F.A. to inquiry whether any suggestion had been made by Germany regarding Slovakia.	289
273	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 127	April 23	Reports enquiry from M.F.A. whether H.M.G. could entertain idea of British loan to Poland for military purposes.	289
274	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 126	April 23	Reports information from M.F.A. regarding German Government's proposals concerning Danzig and reply of Polish Government: attitude of latter described by M. Beck.	289
275	SIR G. OGILVIE-FORBES Berlin No. 475	April 23	Transmits account of celebrations in Berlin on 50th anniversary of Herr Hitler's birthday on April 20.	290
276	TO SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 135	April 24	Refers to No. 269 and transmits views of H.M.G. on points raised.	293
277	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 188	April 24	Refers to No. 247 regarding H.M.G.'s views on Soviet proposals and transmits comments of French Government thereon and lines on which they consider agreement can be reached.	294
278	RECORD OF CONVERSATIONS	April 24	Record of conversations at Foreign Office with Roumanian M.F.A. regarding M. Gafencu's recent conversations with Turkish, Polish, and German Governments, and conversations between H.M.G. and Turkish Government. Question of bringing Bulgaria into Balkan Entente discussed.	295
279	RECORD OF CONVERSATIONS	April 24	Record of conversations at second meeting with M. Gafencu in Prime Minister's room in House of Commons: Roumanian-German relations, position of Poland, progress of H.M.G.'s negotiations with Soviet Government, position of Yugoslavia and arms for Roumania discussed.	309
280	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris No. 496	April 24	Refers to No. 277 and transmits text of Note from French Government summarized therein.	315
281	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 324	April 25	Reports appreciation of international situation by best informed of colleagues: in his opinion immediate and very serious danger was Poland.	318

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
282 SIR W. SEEDS Moscow Tel. No. 76	April 25	Refers to No. 276 and comments on paragraph 1 regarding Soviet proposals.	319
283 To SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 140	April 25	Refers to No. 271 and states that it is not possible to offer any observations thereon until receipt of text of Turkish reply.	320
284 To SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 133 To SIR N. CHARLES Rome Tel. No. 223	April 25	Sets forth lines on which communication should be made to M.F.A. regarding Prime Minister's statement to be made in House of Commons on April 26 announcing introduction of compulsory military service.	320
285 RECORD OF CONVERSATIONS	April 25	Record of conversations held at third meeting with Roumanian M.F.A.: situation regarding Yugoslavia, Turkey, Anglo-Turkish conversations, Poland, Bulgaria, Soviet Union, and Hungary discussed.	321
286 SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 163	April 26	Refers to No. 219 and summarizes text of Turkish reply.	334
287 SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 164	April 26	Refers to No. 286 and reports observations of M.F.A. regarding attitude of Turkish Government in negotiations with Soviet Government.	336
288 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 328	April 26	Refers to No. 289 and reports remarks made to State Secretary regarding change in public opinion in England due to destruction of Czech independence and Herr Hitler's breach of faith towards Prime Minister: observations of State Secretary regarding Herr Hitler's forthcoming speech.	337
289 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 327	April 26	Reports interview with State Secretary when statement contained in No. 284 regarding compulsory military service communicated to him.	337
290 SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 129	April 26	Refers to No. 281 and reports that problem of German-Polish relations as seen from Warsaw differs widely from description given in telegram referred to; transmits observations on attitude of Polish Government.	339
291 SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 167	April 26	Refers to Nos. 286 and 287 and reports further explanation of M.F.A. regarding Turkish attitude concerning Mediterranean and Balkans: M.F.A. agreed that point was approaching when main lines of agreement could be drafted and suggested political agreement should be negotiated in Angora and agreement resulting from staff conversations be concluded in London.	340

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
292	MR. RENDEL Sofia Tel. No. 62	April 26	Reports that Assistant Soviet Commissar for Foreign Affairs arrived in Sofia from Bucharest morning of April 26 and left again in afternoon for Istanbul: President of Council stated he had satisfactory interview with M. Potemkin who was hopeful of reaching complete agreement with Turkish Government regarding joint action for resisting aggression.	341
293	SIR N. CHARLES Rome Tel. No. 395	April 26	Refers to No. 284 and reports action taken: M.F.A. expressed no surprise and said he had expected H.M.G. would take some step in direction of National Service before long.	342
294	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 242 Saving	April 26	Reports gratitude of M. Daladier and M. Bonnet for action of H.M.G. in introducing conscription.	342
295	RECORD OF CONVERSATIONS	April 26	Record of conversations at fourth meeting with Roumanian M.F.A. when Jewish problem and armaments for Roumania discussed.	342
296	TO SIR E. PHIPPS Paris No. 1039	April 26	Records conversation with French Ambassador regarding question of Italian claims and suggestion of H.M.G. that French Government might consider possibility of initiating conversations with Italian Government regarding matter.	344
297	TO SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora No. 204	April 26	Records conversation of Turkish Ambassador with Sir L. Oliphant: Dr. Aras spoke of his talk with Bulgarian Minister in London and said that he had informed latter that it was in Bulgaria's own interest to join with Balkan Entente.	346
298	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 189	April 27	Refers to No. 259 and reports information from M.F.A. regarding conversation of French Ambassador in Rome with Count Ciano who gave M. François-Poncet list of Italian claims. Count Ciano said that Italy had no territorial claims against France.	347
299	TO SIR S. WATERLOW Athens No. 181	April 27	Records conversation of Greek Minister with member of Foreign Office regarding Yugoslav M.F.A.'s acceptance of invitation to go to Venice: latter did not exclude possibility of being asked to join Axis and thought proposal might be put to him for a Four-Power Agreement between Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Albania, and Hungary. Question of Bulgaria's position discussed.	348
300	MR. ORDE Riga No. 168	April 27	Transmits copy of Tallinn despatch No. 127 of April 21 respecting Soviet Government's declaration concerning Estonian sovereignty and animosity in Estonia against Great Britain.	349

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
301 MR. NORTON Warsaw	April 27	Letter to Mr. Strang protesting against tone and substance of recent telegrams from H.M. Embassy in Berlin: points out that peace cannot be ensured by any Polish concessions unless those concessions are made as between equals.	352
302 SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 174	April 28	Reports information from M.F.A. regarding his conversation with Herr von Papen on April 27 concerning international situation: German Ambassador protested that German Government were partisans of peace and said that they required nothing from Turkey except economic conditions.	354
303 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 191	April 28	Reports that M. Daladier considers that Herr Hitler has been greatly impressed by conscription in Great Britain which had a good effect on his speech: President of Council is going to urge U.S. Ambassador to use his influence with President Roosevelt to modify Neutrality Act and suggested that H.M.G. should act in similar sense in Washington.	356
304 TO SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 128 TO SIR R. HOARE Bucharest Tel. No. 165	April 28	Refers to No. 170 regarding negotiations with Soviet Government and transmits terms of revised proposal which it has been decided to put before French Government in endeavour in some degree to meet views of French and Soviet Governments: instructions to inform M.F.A. (Secretary-General) accordingly and report any comments he may make.	357
305 TO SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 186	April 28	Refers to No. 277 and comments on tripartite agreement proposed by French Government: states that H.M.G. still prefer their proposal put forward in No. 170 but in order to meet views of French Government transmits redraft of proposal: instructions to put matter before French Government and inform them that outline of course now proposed has been communicated to Polish and Roumanian Governments for their comments.	358
306 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 335	April 28	Comments on Herr Hitler's speech in Reichstag on April 28: German-Polish Agreement abrogated and Anglo-German Naval Agreement denounced.	359
307 TO SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin No. 849	April 28	Transmits copy of Memorandum on subject of Anglo-German Naval Agreement delivered at Foreign Office by German Chargé d'Affaires on April 28.	360
308 SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora No. 219	April 28	Refers to No. 286 and transmits copy of letter from M.F.A. containing reply of Turkish Government to H.M.G.'s proposals communicated to them on April 20.	362

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
309	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 130	April 29	Reports publication in press of German Note handed to Polish Government at midday on April 28 stating that Polish Government has unilaterally rendered Polish-German Pact of 1934 null and void.	364
310	TO SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 144	April 29	Comments on Nos. 286, 287, and 291 and submits for consideration of Turkish Government form of declaration, text of which is contained in immediately following telegram, which, if Turkish Government agree, might be made public by both Governments simultaneously in near future: suggests procedure to be adopted in negotiation of Treaty.	364
311	TO SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 145	April 29	Refers to No. 310 and transmits text of proposed declaration.	367
312	TO SIR W. SEEDS Moscow Tel. No. 94	April 29	Refers to No. 201 and states that H.M.G. are in consultation with French Government regarding reply to be made to latest Soviet proposal: asks clear up with M. Litvinov misunderstanding referred to in No. 196.	368
313	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 338	April 29	Refers to No. 306 and discusses implications of Herr Hitler's speech in Reichstag on April 28.	369
314	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 157 Saving	April 29	Refers to No. 306 and summarizes main points of Herr Hitler's speech on April 28: only constructive remarks were Germany's willingness (a) to conclude new Anglo-German Naval Treaty, (b) to negotiate fresh German-Polish agreement, and (c) to give certain States guarantees against aggression under certain circumstances.	370
315	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 42 Saving	April 29	Reports reaction in Warsaw to Herr Hitler's speech of April 28.	372
316	TO SIR W. SEEDS Moscow No. 325	April 29	Records conversation with Soviet Ambassador regarding misapprehension of Soviet Government as to attitude of H.M.G., Herr Hitler's speech, conversations of H.M.G. with Roumanian M.F.A., and progress of negotiations with Turkish Government.	373
317	SIR N. CHARLES Rome No. 378	April 29	Discusses aims and policy of Italian Government and Italy's relations with Germany.	375
318	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 192	April 30	Refers to No. 305 regarding negotiations with Soviet Union and reports action taken. French Government will give definite reply on May 2: reports M. Bonnet's views on proposal.	377

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
319 SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 132	April 30	Refers to No. 304 and reports that M.F.A. has no criticism to make of proposal which is being made to French Government.	378
320 SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 131	April 30	Reports information from M.F.A. regarding attitude of Polish Government following Herr Hitler's speech of April 28 and receipt of German Note denouncing German-Polish Pact of 1934.	378
321 SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 133	April 30	Reports suggestion from M.F.A. that staff conversations should be initiated without delay and that British military experts should come to Warsaw to discuss military requirements with General Staff: M. Beck suggested that should H.M.G. accept idea of loan in principle, it might be advisable that Polish experts should go to London to discuss details.	379
322 SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 178	April 30	Summarizes points in telegram which French Ambassador is sending to Paris regarding his conversation with M. Potemkin on April 30.	380
323 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 249 Saving	April 30	Reports impressions of M.F.A. regarding Herr Hitler's speech.	381

CHAPTER V

The European situation: Polish-German relations: further British proposals and Soviet counter-proposals: correspondence with the Vatican. (May 1-6, 1939.)

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
324 SIR R. HOARE Bucharest Tel. No. 158	May 1	Refers to No. 304 and reports comments of President of Council thereon: latter will discuss matter with M.F.A. on his return, but is uneasy regarding effect proposed Soviet declaration might have on Germany.	382
325 SIR A. RYAN Durazzo Tel. No. 74	May 1	Reports that everything now points to existence of serious threat to Greece: French colleague is greatly perturbed but Yugoslav Military Attaché takes less serious view.	382
326 MR. STRANG Foreign Office	May 1	Minute recording conversation with Polish Ambassador regarding M. Beck's conversation with Herr Hitler at Berchtesgaden on January 5: Count Raczynski stated that immediate object of Herr Hitler's policy was to break connexion between Eastern and Western European countries, but nevertheless M. Beck would do his best to create <i>détente</i> between Poland and Germany.	383

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
327	To SIR E. PHIPPS Paris No. 1069	May 1	Records conversation with French Ambassador regarding progress of negotiations with Turkey and conversation of Secretary of State with Soviet Ambassador on April 29 (see No. 316).	385
328	To SIR E. PHIPPS Paris No. 1071	May 1	Records conversation with French Ambassador regarding question of Franco-Italian conversations: hope expressed that M. Daladier would take advantage of recent conversation of Count Ciano with M. François-Poncet to make some move in matter.	386
329	SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 179	May 2	Reports that M.F.A. is evidently non-plussed as to how to proceed with his policy for bringing Bulgaria into Balkan Entente: attitude of Roumanian M.F.A. seems to have been stiffened by his visits to London and Paris and M.F.A. thinks he has been encouraged in Paris not to make territorial concessions.	387
330	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 342	May 2	Reports conversation with M.F.A. regarding Anglo-German relations: considers that Herr von Ribbentrop now not so confident as hitherto that Great Britain would never fight.	387
331	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 341	May 2	Comments on No. 320 and suggests that statements of Polish M.F.A. in paragraph 3 are disingenuous: asks whether M. Beck made any mention of exact terms of German proposals during recent visit to London.	388
332	SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 180	May 2	Inquires what reply should be returned to M.F.A.'s question whether it was intended that Russia should receive guarantee of British and French support if attacked by Germany, for instance, through Lithuania.	389
333	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 343	May 2	Reports conversation with M.F.A. regarding Poland: Herr von Ribbentrop indulged in language similar to that employed by him in 1938 in regard to Czechoslovakia: in reply to question, M.F.A. stated that German Ambassador would be returning to Warsaw without any special instructions; Herr Hitler had made his offer and would not repeat it.	389
334	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 345	May 2	Reports information from diplomatic colleague regarding rumour of preparations being made for invasion of Poland through Lithuania or Latvia within next fourteen days: if, however, it were decided not to carry out plan, invasion would be postponed for four months: comments thereon.	390

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
335 SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 138	May 2	Reports representations made to M.F.A.'s Chef de Cabinet regarding articles in Polish press concerning Danzig which might be liable to upset British public opinion.	391
336 MR. MAKINS Foreign Office	May 2	Minute on conversations with M. Burckhardt, M. Avenol, and Mr. Walters regarding methods of handling Danzig question at next session of Council.	391
337 MR. MAKINS Foreign Office	May 2	Minute on discussions with M. Burckhardt and M. Avenol regarding general situation.	395
338 To SIR R. HOARE Bucharest No. 224	May 2	Records account received from Roumanian Minister of results of M. Gafencu's recent conversations in Paris. M. Tilea denied point in Herr Hitler's speech that Roumania had asked for common frontier with Germany; what she had asked for was common frontier with Slovakia.	395
339 FRENCH AMBASSADOR London	May 2	<i>Aide-mémoire</i> regarding wish of French Government for tripartite agreement with Turkey.	396
340 SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw	May 2	Letter to Sir A. Cadogan stating that there appears to be a tendency among Diplomatic Corps in Berlin to suggest that Poland, encouraged by British guarantee, is adopting an unreasonable attitude as regards Danzig and minority questions: comments thereon and explains why he considers nothing should be done to discourage Poles: urges importance of British loan and initiation of Staff conversations.	397
341 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 348	May 3	Reports Herr von Ribbentrop's remark that Chancellor would judge H.M.G. by facts and not words: presumes reference is to British guarantee to Poland and to ability of H.M.G. to exercise moderating influence at Warsaw.	398
342 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 349	May 3	Urges that H.M.G. should let Polish Government know that they count on reply of M. Beck to Herr Hitler to be such as to leave door open for negotiations.	399
343 SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 181	May 3	Refers to No. 322 and reports that according to M.F.A. little progress is being made at present in negotiations with M. Potemkin who appears to be awaiting instructions. M.F.A. anxious that Russia should be firmly anchored to side of Allies as he feels it would be disastrous if general war were to take place in which Russia would be neutral.	399
344 SIR W. SEEDS Moscow Tel. No. 80	May 3	Refers to No. 312 and reports reply given to M. Litvinov in answer to question whether there would be a declaration of war by H.M.G. in event of aggression.	400

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
345	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 350	May 3	Reports information from Italian Ambassador regarding Herr von Ribbentrop's visit to Italian lakes where he would meet Count Ciano: stresses importance why M. Beck in his public reply to Herr Hitler should not define exact limits beyond which Poland would never go.	400
346	TO SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 137	May 3	Records statement of policy of H.M.G. regarding implications of guarantee given to Poland: instructions to inform M. Beck accordingly.	401
347	TO SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 143	May 3	Refers to No. 346 and states that telegram in question is repeated for personal information only: line which H.M. Ambassador at Warsaw has been instructed to take up should not be disclosed to any colleague or German Government.	402
348	TO SIR R. HOARE Bucharest Tel. No. 186	May 3	Records information from Roumanian Minister that Roumanian M.F.A. had found that French view on subject of Bulgaria was more or less identical with that of Roumanian Government, viz. that this was not the time to make territorial concessions to that country.	403
349	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 164 Saving	May 3	Summarizes press comment attacking Poland and insisting on Germany's peaceful intentions.	403
350	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 257 Saving	May 3	Refers to No. 318 regarding proposals to Soviet Government and transmits full summary of French reply.	404
351	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 258 Saving	May 3	Refers to No. 350 and reports oral communication made by Political Director of Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding modified text of French proposal given to Soviet Ambassador by M. Bonnet, in order to dispel suspicions of M. Souritch.	406
352	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw No. 120	May 3	Transmits report on minority question and in particular to its effect on Polish-German relations.	406
353	SIR W. SEEDS Moscow Tel. No. 81	May 4	Reports that M. Litvinov has been succeeded by M. Molotov as Commissar for Foreign Affairs.	410
354	MR. GALLIENNE Tallinn Tel. No. 2 to Riga Tel. No. 2 to F.O.	May 4	Reports that German Government have made proposal to Estonian Government for Treaty of Non-Aggression: Estonian Government is in communication with Scandinavian Governments and proposal is likely to be accepted.	410
355	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 139	May 4	Refers to No. 346 and reports M. Beck's reaction to observations made to him: he gave assurance that while tone of his speech would be firm, it would in no way be provocative or close door to further negotiations.	410

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
356	MR. OSBORNE Vatican Tel. No. 22	May 4	Transmits summary of message which Pope is about to address to Kings of England and Italy and Presidents of France and Poland appealing for peace and suggesting that conference be held to discuss questions at issue: Pope would welcome approval of H.M.G.	411
357	SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 184	May 4	Refers to No. 343 and reports conversation with M. Potemkin who leaves Angora on May 5: M. Potemkin expressed himself as pleased with his visit and said everything now depended on reply of H.M.G. to Soviet Government and on negotiations with Turkey: he added that point of primary concern to Russia was to secure satisfactory settlement of Bulgarian-Roumanian relations.	411
358	TO SIR A. RYAN Durazzo Tel. No. 49	May 4	Refers to No. 325 and states that from reports received it would not appear that Italy contemplates attacking Greece in immediate future: considers estimate of Yugoslav Military Attaché regarding number of Italian troops is correct.	412
359	SIR W. SEEDS Moscow Tel. No. 83	May 4	Refers to No. 353 and comments on appointment of M. Molotov as Commissar for Foreign Affairs.	412
360	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 260 Saving	May 4	Reports comments in French press which sound note of caution regarding Danzig: understands that M. Daladier attaches little importance to them and general opinion seems to be that France has had enough of Germany's aggressive policy.	413
361	FOREIGN OFFICE Memorandum	May 4	Memorandum summarizing information concerning German proposals regarding Danzig and Polish Corridor, and Polish counter-proposals, March-April, 1939.	415
362	APOSTOLIC DELEGATE London	May 4	Letter to Secretary of State informing him of Pope's proposal to send message to Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy, and Poland inviting them to call conference to discuss questions which threaten to provoke war: enquires attitude of H.M.G. to this proposal.	420
363	SIR P. LORRAINE Rome No. 399	May 4	Transmits memorandum by Military Attaché regarding progress made by Italian army since beginning of 1939.	420
364	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin	May 4	Letter to Secretary of State discussing German point of view on question of Danzig and Corridor and advisability of making this question cause for war: expresses view that Poles in refusing Herr Hitler's offer are playing his game.	422
365	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin	May 4	Letter to Sir A. Cadogan informing him of reports constantly heard that Nazi party leaders, including Herr von Ribbentrop, believe that Britain is still unprepared in last resort to go to war over question like Danzig.	424

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
366	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin	May 4	Letter to Sir A. Cadogan informing him of information received from Italian Ambassador that whole trouble with Poland was based on Slovakia issue: had M. Beck got Slovakia as a set-off, he might have given up Danzig without too much criticism from Poles.	424
367	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin	May 4	Letter to Sir O. Sargent informing him of views expressed by M. Dembinski, principal Polish journalist in Berlin that Great Britain and Poland wanted to make war on Germany as latter still comparatively weak: reports information given to Press Attaché by 'The Times' correspondent regarding Herr Hitler's aims.	425
368	SIR P. LORAINÉ Rome Tel. No. 429	May 5	Reports views of Military Attaché regarding Italian troops in Albania: in his opinion numbers do not constitute serious or immediate threat to Greece or Yugoslavia.	426
369	SIR P. LORAINÉ Rome Tel. No. 430	May 5	Reports interview with Roumanian M.F.A. who gave an account of his conversations with Signor Mussolini: latter, while affirming Italy's solidarity with Germany, stated that up to present Italy had not committed herself to any signed engagement with Reich: question of Italian claims on France discussed.	426
370	SIR P. LORAINÉ Rome Tel. No. 431	May 5	Refers to No. 369 and reports conversation with French Ambassador regarding Italian claims on France and question of initiating conversations.	428
371	SIR P. LORAINÉ Rome Tel. No. 432	May 5	Reports views exchanged with French Ambassador regarding present state of German-Polish relations: considers that Italian Government view situation with anxiety and, according to Turkish Ambassador, Count Ciano intends to do all he can to urge on Herr Hitler desirability of peaceful solution.	429
372	SIR P. LORAINÉ Rome Tel. No. 433	May 5	Asks Sir A. Cadogan for his appreciation of significance of M. Litvinov's resignation and informs him of French Ambassador's theory: according to Soviet Chargé d'Affaires substitution of M. Molotov for M. Litvinov signifies no change in Russian policy.	429
373	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 356	May 5	Reports conversation with German Ambassador before his departure for London: Ambassador did his best to justify actions of his Government but seemed sincere in his desire for period of calm which might lead to improvement in Anglo-German relations.	429
374	TO SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 143	May 5	Discusses responsibilities of League of Nations regarding Danzig and position of High Commissioner and asks for M. Beck's views regarding matter.	430

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
375	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 194	May 5	Reports information from M.F.A. that Pope was about to address a public invitation to Great Britain, France, Italy, Germany, and Poland to meet together and discuss pending questions in conference: M. Bonnet rather deprecated proposal but gathered from Nuncio that Pope's decision was already taken.	432
376	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 195	May 5	Refers to Nos. 369 and 370 and reports conversation with M.F.A. regarding Franco-Italian conversations: M. Bonnet stated that conversation begun last week between French Ambassador and Count Ciano would be continued: M. Daladier and M. Léger however opposed to discussions.	432
377	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 355	May 5	Reports information from Polish Military Attaché regarding remarks made by General Bodenschatz concerning Field-Marshal Göring and inevitability of war in 1939: he added that important results would probably follow joint German and Italian approaches to Russian Government.	433
378	SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 189	May 5	Refers to No. 357 and reports information from M.F.A. regarding conversations held during M. Potemkin's visit on subjects of (1) Turkish understanding with H.M.G. regarding Mediterranean, (2) difficulty between Bulgaria and Roumania, (3) negotiations for pact between Great Britain, France, and Soviet Union, and Turkish-Soviet relations.	433
379	SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 190	May 5	Refers to No. 378 and reports remarks of M.F.A. regarding proposed Turco-Soviet Agreement and his hope that Turkey could first make her agreement with H.M.G. and French Government and that Soviet Government could then be incorporated: M.F.A. offered his help as intermediary if requested in negotiations of H.M.G. with Soviet Government.	434
380	TO MR. OSBORNE Vatican Tel. No. 10	May 5	Refers to No. 356 and summarizes conversation with Apostolic Delegate regarding Pope's proposal for conference between five Powers.	435
381	SIR A. RYAN Durazzo Tel. No. 79	May 5	Refers to No. 358 and reports conversation with Greek Minister who after visiting Athens is less apprehensive of sudden attack on Greece: he stressed anxiety of Greek Government to avoid anything which might provoke Italy.	436
382	TO SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 50 Saving	May 5	Refers to No. 331 and states that M. Beck said nothing about German proposals beyond what appears in Record of Conversations (see Nos. 1, 2, 10, and 16).	437

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
383	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 169 Saving	May 5	Transmits text of statement in press regarding non-aggression pacts between Germany, Latvia, and Estonia.	437
384	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 261 Saving	May 5	Transmits text of declaration made to press by M. Daladier on evening of May 4 protesting against attempts being made in press to try either to weaken resolution of Government and of nation, or to create abroad uncertainty as to clarity and integrity of French policy.	438
385	TO MR. OSBORNE Vatican No. 27	May 5	Records fuller account of conversation with Apostolic Delegate summarized in No. 380.	439
386	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw No. 125	May 5	Comments on speech made by M. Beck before Polish Parliament on May 5 and stresses moderate tone of speech and repeated emphasis laid on willingness of Polish Government to enjoy good relations with Germany provided they were treated on footing of equality.	440
387	SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 191	May 6	Refers to No. 302 and reports information from M.F.A. regarding Count Ciano's conversation with Turkish Ambassador in Rome. In course of conversation of Herr von Papen with M.F.A., former said that if only he were given time he would find some means whereby Germany could give effective guarantees to Turkey.	442
388	SIR P. LORAINÉ Rome Tel. No. 436	May 6	Reports views of M.F.A. regarding danger resulting from difficulty between Germany and Poland: Count Ciano affirmed that Italy wished for peace and serenity.	442
389	TO SIR W. SEEDS Moscow Tel. No. 98	May 6	States that immediately following telegram transmits lines on which reply should be made to Soviet Government concerning their proposals reported in No. 201; instructions regarding presentation of reply.	443
390	SIR S. WATERLOW Athens Tel. No. 185	May 6	Refers to No. 358 and reports remarks made to Italian Minister regarding anxiety of Greek Government in regard to Italian troop concentrations in Albania. Reports information from Greek Prime Minister regarding assurances given to him by Italian Minister in regard to Italy's intentions towards Greece.	444
391	SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 192	May 6	Refers to Nos. 310 and 311 and reports that Turkish Government agree to declaration proposed with certain minor amendments: declaration to be brought before National Assembly and M.F.A. would be glad to know date on which H.M.G. propose to make statement in Parliament so that two statements should synchronize.	444

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
392	SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 194	May 6	Refers to No. 393 and transmits explanations of Turkish amendments.	445
393	SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 193	May 6	Refers to No. 391 and transmits text of declaration with amendments desired by Turkish Government.	446
394	SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 195	May 6	Refers to No. 310 and reports reasons given by M.F.A. for omission of reference to Balkans; transmits lines on which Turkish Government agree answer could be made in House should question be brought up.	447
395	SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 197	May 6	Refers to No. 391 and reports that since meeting of Popular Party on May 5, Angora is full of rumours that Turkey has concluded close alliance with United Kingdom: considers for this reason sooner declaration can be made the better.	447
396	SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 196	May 6	Refers to Nos. 391, 392, and 393 and reports that French colleague has received instructions from Paris emphasizing desire of French Government that declaration should be tripartite and include French Government: M.F.A. agrees.	448
397	TO SIR W. SEEDS Moscow Tel. No. 99	May 6	Refers to No. 389 and sets forth lines on which reply should be made to Soviet Government.	448
398	TO SIR P. LORAINÉ Rome Tel. No. 235	May 6	Refers to No. 372 and transmits views regarding reasons for M. Litvinov's resignation.	451
399	TO SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 172 Saving TO SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 146	May 6	Refers to suggestion made by Vatican for five-Power Conference to deal principally with questions of Danzig and Franco-Italian differences: instructions to enquire views of French/Polish Government regarding matter and to put before French/Polish Government alternative suggestion of H.M.G.	451
400	SIR A. CADOGAN Foreign Office	May 6	Minute on conversation with French Ambassador regarding progress of negotiations with Turkey.	452
401	TO SIR W. SEEDS Moscow No. 342	May 6	Records conversation with Soviet Ambassador regarding proposals received from Soviet Government and views of H.M.G.: M. Maisky in reply to question stated that no change of policy was to be assumed from recent departure of M. Litvinov.	453
402	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw No. 126	May 6	Comments on Polish memorandum communicated to German Government on May 5 in reply to German memorandum of April 28.	454

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
403 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin	May 6	Letter to Secretary of State drawing attention to M. Beck's references in his speech to conversations with Germany; discusses dangers of present situation as regards Danzig and Corridor and of increasingly unsound economic condition of Germany: urges necessity for satisfying Italian demands on France.	455

CHAPTER VI

The European situation: Polish-German relations: further correspondence with the Soviet Government: Anglo-Turkish Declaration of May 12. (May 7-12, 1939.)

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
404 MR. OSBORNE Vatican Tel. No. 23	May 7	Refers to No. 380 and reports information from Under-Secretary of State regarding Pope's proposal for five-Power Conference and replies received to suggestion.	458
405 TO SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 193	May 7	Refers to Nos. 286, 310, and 311: instructions to keep French Government informed in general terms of present stage in exchange of views with Turkish Government: comments on proposed declaration relating to Mediterranean and discusses association of France with any declaration or agreements reached between H.M.G. and Turkish Government.	459
406 SIR W. SEEDS Moscow Tel. No. 84	May 7	Refers to No. 359 and reports that formal notification of M. Molotov's appointment has been received. Press still refrains from any comments on British and French policy but direct attacks on Germany and Italy seem to have ceased: rumours of appointment of new German Ambassador.	460
407 SIR W. SEEDS Moscow Tel. No. 86	May 7	Refers to No. 389 and asks for explanation regarding reference to Point 6 of Soviet proposal.	460
408 TO SIR W. SEEDS Moscow Tel. No. 102	May 7	Refers to No. 407 and explains reference in question.	461
409 SIR P. LORRAINE Rome Tel. No. 441	May 8	Reports official communiqué announcing that political and military Pact will be signed between Italian and German Governments.	461
410 MR. ORDE Riga Tel. No. 14	May 8	Reports information from M.F.A. regarding conclusion of Non-Aggression Pact with Germany: reports reply of Latvian Government to German enquiry whether Latvia felt herself threatened by Germany.	461

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
411 SIR P. RAMSAY Copenhagen Tel. No. 25	May 8	Reports information from M.F.A. that Northern Ministers in Berlin were sent for and asked whether they were prepared to discuss non-aggression pacts with Germany: common answer would probably be devised at Stockholm.	462
412 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 362	May 8	Refers to No. 399 and reports information from Nuncio that he had been well received by Herr Hitler on occasion of his visit to Berchtesgaden: he was unable to give any details of visit as he had promised to maintain strictest secrecy. Nuncio added that he hoped H.M.G. would note that present Pope since his accession had not in public criticized German policy towards Church.	462
413 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 363	May 8	Reports information from French Ambassador that he has had several indications that Herr Hitler has come to an understanding with M. Stalin: rumoured that any understanding might take form of non-aggression pact.	463
414 SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 201	May 8	Reports information from M.F.A. regarding reaction of Bulgarian Minister and German Ambassador to news of proposed Anglo-Turkish declaration: question of inclusion of Bulgaria in Balkan Entente discussed with M.F.A.	463
415 SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 202	May 8	Reports interview with M.F.A. when His Excellency described in angry terms exasperation caused by attitude of French Government in regard to Hatay negotiations.	465
416 SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 145	May 8	Reports that considered views on Vatican proposal will be received from Polish Government on May 9 or 10.	466
417 SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 146	May 8	Refers to No. 374 and reports M. Beck's reactions to considerations put forward: definite views will be telegraphed on May 9 or 10. Reports conversation with German Ambassador who appears to have no instructions to make any further move regarding Danzig.	466
418 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 268 Saving	May 8	Refers to No. 399 and reports views of French Government regarding proposal made by Vatican for Conference: as regards alternative suggestion of H.M.G., French Government would object to Papal good offices regarding Franco-Italian discussions.	467
419 MR. INGRAM Foreign Office	May 8	Minute regarding telephone message from Embassy in Paris asking whether instructions in No. 405 to acquaint French Government of present stage in exchange of views with Turkish Government still held good in view of later telegrams from Angora (Nos. 391-4 and 396).	468

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
420	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin	May 8	Letter to Sir A. Cadogan regarding possibility of it becoming necessary to address strong representations to German Government: discusses relative merits of making such a communication through Herr von Ribbentrop or Baron von Weizsäcker or by means of a letter from Prime Minister to Herr Hitler.	468
421	SIR W. SEEDS Moscow Tel. No. 87	May 9	Refers to No. 397 and summarizes account of interview with M. Molotov when reply of H.M.G. to Soviet proposals was communicated to him.	469
422	SIR W. SEEDS Moscow Tel. No. 88	May 9	Refers to Nos. 389 and 421 and reports remark of Marshal Voroshilov to Naval Attaché which seemed to point to fact that Soviet policy had not changed.	471
423	TO SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 161	May 9	Refers to Nos. 391-6 and comments on amended text of proposed declaration: most of amendments unobjectionable but agreement cannot be given to alteration of substance in paragraph 3: instructions to urge Turkish Government to agree to inclusion of paragraph regarding Balkans.	471
424	SIR P. LORAINÉ Rome Tel. No. 445	May 9	Refers to No. 409 and discusses implications of German political and military alliance decided on in principle at meeting at Milan between Count Ciano and Herr von Ribbentrop.	473
425	TO SIR P. LORAINÉ Rome Tel. No. 236	May 9	Refers to progress of H.M.G.'s negotiations with Turkey and asks for views as to whether proposed declaration should be bipartite or tripartite (to include French) in so far as effect on Italian opinion is concerned.	475
426	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 150	May 9	Refers to No. 416 and reports that Polish Government would prefer alternative suggestion put forward by H.M.G., viz. that Pope should offer his good offices. M.F.A. feels that conference without due preparation might do more harm than good: Vatican will also be informed.	475
427	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 149	May 9	Reports information from M.F.A. that M. Potemkin would arrive in Warsaw on night of May 9 and leave on May 10: should M. Potemkin ask for interview M. Beck would gladly give it. M. Beck further stated that Polish Ambassador in Moscow had had satisfactory interview with M. Molotov.	476
428	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 148	May 9	Refers to No. 417 and reports M.F.A.'s opinion that best course would be for Committee of Three to take no action and to leave matters as they are: M. Beck would be prepared to ask M. Burckhardt to visit Warsaw and ready to suggest that he should visit Berlin on his way.	476

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
429	SIR P. LORAINÉ Rome Tel. No. 446	May 9	Refers to No. 376 regarding Franco-Italian conversations and reports information from French Ambassador that his instructions were by no means precise, but he intended to see M.F.A. shortly.	477
430	SIR P. LORAINÉ Rome Tel. No. 449	May 9	Refers to No. 404 and comments on Vatican's proposal.	477
431	TO SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 150	May 9	Transmits statement to be made if opportunity offers, to General Keitel and/or Chief of Staff regarding attitude of H.M.G. to implementation of their guarantee to Poland and Danzig question.	478
432	TO SIR P. LORAINÉ Rome Tel. No. 239	May 9	Refers to No. 431: instructions, if opportunity offers, to speak on same lines unofficially to suitable personages in Rome, and, more especially, those connected with Court and Army.	478
433	TO SIR W. SEEDS Moscow No. 357	May 9	Records conversation with Soviet Ambassador regarding elucidation of certain points in formula submitted to M. Molotov (see No. 397).	479
434	TO SIR E. PHIPPS Paris No. 1141	May 9	Records conversation with French Ambassador regarding views of French Government on question of conversations with Italian Government and proposal put forward by Pope.	480
435	TO SIR R. HOARE Bucharest No. 236	May 9	Records conversation with Roumanian Minister regarding Roumanian M.F.A.'s visits to Rome and Belgrade, negotiations of H.M.G. with Russia and Turkey, Pope's proposed appeal for conference of Great Powers, Danzig, question of raising Legation in Bucharest to an Embassy, and help for Roumania in economic and armaments sphere.	480
436	SIR W. SEEDS Moscow No. 142	May 9	Refers to No. 421 and transmits detailed account of interview with M. Molotov summarized therein.	483
437	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris No. 608	May 9	Transmits copy of memorandum by Air Attaché regarding his conversation with Colonel de Vitrolles on general European situation.	488
438	MR. OSBORNE Vatican No. 82	May 9	Refers to No. 385 and transmits observations thereon: emphasizes fact that Pope has not slightest idea of any direct or indirect participation in round-table meeting which he will advocate and there is no question of its taking place on Vatican territory.	489
439	TO SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 152	May 10	Refers to No. 442: instructions to discuss with M. Beck possibility of any immediate threat to Poland requiring instantaneous counter-action and obtain his views on manner in which such a threat might develop and steps which Polish Government would take to avert or counter it.	490

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
440	SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 204	May 10	Refers to Nos. 391 and 393 and reports information from Secretary-General of Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding unfavourable reaction of Yugoslav Government to suggested declaration: in view of Turkish Government the sooner declaration is made the better.	490
441	SIR W. SEEDS Moscow Tel. No. 89	May 10	Transmits text of Tass communiqué regarding British counter-proposals.	491
442	TO SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 151	May 10	Instructions to discuss with M. Beck and endeavour to elicit his views regarding steps to be taken by Poland should Danzig declare its union with Germany and takes whatever steps are necessary to make it effective in collaboration with German Government, but without German troops entering Danzig.	492
443	SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 205	May 10	Refers to No. 423 and corrects paragraph 3 of text of proposed declaration contained in No. 393.	493
444	SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 206	May 10	Refers to No. 423 and reports that Turkish Government agree to inclusion of paragraph regarding Balkans: they are prepared to make declaration on May 10 between 2 and 4 p.m.	493
445	SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 207	May 10	Refers to Nos. 443 and 444 and reports that M.F.A. agrees that assumption in first paragraph of No. 423 regarding paragraph 2 is correct.	494
446	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 200A	May 10	Refers to No. 405 regarding negotiations with Turkey and reports that French Government agree to procedure proposed by H.M.G. and to terms of proposed declaration which they consider essential should be tripartite, question whether subsequent arrangements should have a bilateral character being reserved.	494
447	TO SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 164	May 10	Refers to No. 444 and regrets it will be impossible for H.M.G. to make announcement of declaration on May 10: date and hour on which it will be possible to do so will be telegraphed later.	494
448	SIR P. LORAINÉ Rome Tel. No. 46 to Berlin Tel. No. 450 to F.O.	May 10	Refers to No. 431 and enquires from Sir N. Henderson, Berlin, whether he has acted or intends to act in full sense of instructions contained therein.	495
449	MR. SNOW Helsingfors Tel. No. 46	May 10	Reports observations of M.F.A. regarding Finland's attitude to German offer of non-aggression pact: if Finland received no guarantee from Russia in any shape or form they would reject Pact, but if Soviet guarantee materialized they would then be compelled to accept German offer.	495

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
450 To SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 195	May 10	Refers to No. 423 and states that Turkish Government have agreed to H.M.G.'s suggestions; final text of declaration handed to French Ambassador on May 10: records reply given to M. Cambon on his repeating desire of French Government that declaration should be in tripartite form.	496
451 To SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 196	May 10	Refers to No. 450 and transmits text of declaration.	496
452 SIR P. LORAINÉ Rome Tel. No. 452	May 10	Refers to No. 432 and reports action he proposes to take unless otherwise instructed.	497
453 To SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 167	May 10	Refers to No. 440 and expresses regret and surprise regarding Yugoslav Government's attitude to declaration: instructions to assure Turkish M.F.A. that if any change in wording of declaration would meet point regarding solidarity of Balkan Entente, H.M.G. would be prepared to consider it.	498
454 MR. OSBORNE Vatican Tel. No. 27	May 10	Refers to No. 399 and reports that Pope has decided not to proceed with his project at present: decision chiefly due to assurances received from Herr Hitler and Signor Mussolini that there was no immediate menace of war arising out of German-Polish and Franco-Italian differences.	498
455 To SIR P. LORAINÉ Rome Tel. No. 240	May 10	Instructions not to take action proposed in No. 452 unless further instructions received.	499
456 SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 209	May 10	Refers to No. 310 and reports reply of Turkish Government to points raised therein with exception of proposed declaration: suggested procedure for negotiation of treaty is accepted by Turkish Government.	499
457 SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 152	May 10	Reports information from M.F.A. regarding his conversation with M. Potemkin concerning Polish-Soviet relations.	500
458 SIR R. HOARE Bucharest Tel. No. 201	May 10	Refers to No. 440 and reports that generally speaking M.F.A. confirms information regarding reactions of Yugoslav Government to proposed Anglo-Turkish declaration: he is informing Roumanian Minister in London of subsequent developments which appear to be satisfactory.	501
459 SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 151	May 10	Refers to Nos. 442 and 439 and reports views of M. Beck regarding points raised.	501

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
460	TO SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 169	May 10	Refers to No. 447 and states that H.M.G. have agreed to desire of French Government to be associated in proposed declaration and hope that Turkish Government will also agree: if so H.M.G. will be prepared to announce terms of declaration in Parliament on May 12.	502
461	TO SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 170	May 10	Refers to No. 460 and transmits alterations in declaration required to convert it from a bipartite into a tripartite form.	502
462	SIR P. LORAINÉ Rome Tel. No. 455	May 10	Refers to No. 425 and transmits views regarding effect bipartite or tripartite declaration would have on Italian Government.	503
463	TO SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 187 Saving	May 10	Refers to Nos. 446 and 471 and states that if Turkish Government do not agree to tripartite declaration then announcement which must be made in House on May 12 will be in bipartite form: hopes French Government will do their best to allay irritation which exists in regard to Hatay negotiations.	504
464	TO SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 188 Saving	May 10	Records conversation with French Ambassador regarding matters raised in No. 415, i.e. negotiations with Turkish Government regarding Hatay question.	504
465	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 270 Saving	May 10	Reports press comments on Vatican's proposal for five-Power conference.	505
466	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 275 Saving	May 10	Reports information from U.S. Ambassador that he has heard from Russian source that there is little or no chance of Soviet Government accepting proposals of H.M.G.: according to same source change of Commissars for Foreign Affairs implies no change in Soviet policy.	505
467	SIR E. MONSON Stockholm Tel. No. 25 Saving	May 10	Transmits text of communiqué issued after meeting of four Scandinavian Foreign Ministers held to discuss their attitude towards German overtures regarding non-aggression pacts.	505
468	MR. STRANG Foreign Office	May 10	Minute regarding message telephoned to Soviet Ambassador informing him that owing to communiqué published by Soviet Government regarding British proposals, statement would be made in House of Commons on afternoon of May 10.	506
469	TO SIR E. PHIPPS Paris No. 1160	May 10	Records conversation with French Ambassador regarding (1) question whether Turkish agreement should be bipartite or tripartite and (2) Hatay negotiations between French and Turkish Governments.	507

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
470 To SIR E. PHIPPS Paris No. 1162	May 10	Records conversation with M. Blum regarding his visit to Sweden and attitude of Swedish Government regarding supplies of iron ore to Germany in event of war; question of Spain and progress of negotiations with Soviet and Turkish Governments discussed.	507
471 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris No. 615	May 10	Transmits copy of <i>aide-memoire</i> received from French Government regarding their desire to take part in Anglo-Turkish declaration which they feel should be tripartite.	508
472 MR. SHEPHERD Danzig No. 111	May 10	Transmits report on present situation in Danzig.	510
473 SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 210	May 11	Refers to No. 447 and reports action taken: according to Turkish Prime Minister Turkish Government contemplated two bilateral declarations, viz. Anglo-Turkish and Franco-Turkish: urges earliest possible issue of declaration.	516
474 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 21 to Rome Tel. No. 368 to F.O.	May 11	Refers to No. 448 concerning attitude of H.M.G. to implementation of their guarantee to Poland and informs Sir P. Loraine of action he intends to take regarding instructions received in No. 431.	516
475 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 370	May 11	Refers to No. 474 and reports that in view of telephonic instructions received no action will be taken pending receipt of further instructions.	517
476 To SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 155	May 11	Instructions not to deliver message in No. 431 through a third party such as Military Attaché.	517
477 To SIR P. LORAINÉ Rome Tel. No. 241	May 11	Instructions regarding manner in which instructions contained in No. 432 should be carried out.	518
478 SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 213	May 11	Refers to No. 479 and reports that Turkish Government refuse to make Franco-Turkish declaration until they have something definite about Hatay: arrangement has been come to with M.F.A. that bilateral declaration will be made in Angora and London on May 12 unless information received to contrary.	518
479 SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 212	May 11	Refers to No. 460 and transmits text of reply of Turkish Government to H.M.G.'s proposal regarding tripartite agreement.	519
480 SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 214	May 11	Refers to No. 453 and reports that M.F.A. has received formal undertaking from Yugoslav M.F.A. that he would not commit himself to any engagement during his visit to Italy.	519
481 SIR W. SEEDS Moscow Tel. No. 90	May 11	Reports article in 'Izvestiya' of May 11 which must be considered to represent views of Soviet Government regarding Anglo-French-Soviet negotiations.	520

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
482 To SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 198	May 11	Refers to Nos. 479 and 478: instructions to inform M.F.A. that H.M.G. will at 11 a.m. on May 12 make declaration in House of Commons in tripartite form if French Government have before then arranged matters with Turkish Government: failing this H.M.G. will make declaration in its bipartite form.	522
483 To MR. SNOW Helsingfors Tel. No. 24	May 11	Refers to No. 449 and records assurances given to Finnish Minister regarding H.M.G.'s attitude towards Finland <i>vis-à-vis</i> Anglo-Soviet negotiations.	522
484 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 202	May 11	Refers to No. 482 and reports that Secretary-General of Ministry of Foreign Affairs has called meeting of prominent officials with view to drawing up draft of revised instructions to French Ambassador at Angora, for approval of French Ministers.	523
485 To SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 176	May 11	Refers to No. 478 and states that declaration will be made in Parliament at 11 a.m. on May 12 in tripartite form if notification of Turkish Government's agreement has been received before 10 a.m.: if not declaration will be made in bipartite Anglo-Turkish form.	523
486 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 371	May 11	Reports solemn assurance received from Italian Ambassador that basis of Ciano-Ribbentrop discussions at Milan had been entirely on lines of ensuring peace.	523
487 To MR. OSBORNE Vatican Tel. No. 15	May 11	Instructions to inform Cardinal Secretary of State of result of enquiries made by H.M.G. in Paris and Warsaw regarding proposal of Vatican and of opinion of H.M.G. regarding steps which might be taken with most hope of success.	524
488 To SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 156	May 11	Agrees in general with M. Beck's opinion and suggested course of action as stated in No. 428: considers it important that M. Beck should issue his invitation to M. Burckhardt to visit Warsaw before Council meets.	525
489 To SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 157	May 11	Records intentions of H.M.G. regarding implementation of their guarantee to Poland respecting Danzig.	525
490 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 203	May 11	Refers to No. 484 and reports that French Ambassador has been instructed to liquidate Franco-Turkish negotiations night of May 11 by giving Turkish Government sufficient satisfaction on point at issue to ensure agreement.	526
491 SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 215	May 11	Refers to No. 485 and reports that Turkish Government have been unable to reach agreement with French Ambassador and will therefore make declaration in bipartite form on afternoon of May 12.	526

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
492 To SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 192 Saving	May 11	Refers to Nos. 428 and 488: instructions to inform French Government of views of H.M.G. regarding action to be taken by Committee of Three when it meets at Geneva and also of views of Polish Government as given in No. 428.	527
493 SIR A. CADOGAN Foreign Office	May 11	Minute regarding summary of telegram received from French Ambassador reporting conversation of French Ambassador in Berlin with Herr von Weizsäcker regarding German-Polish situation: German Government awaiting move on part of M. Beck.	527
494 To SIR W. SEEDS Moscow No. 366	May 11	Records conversation with Soviet Ambassador regarding Soviet Government's insistence on necessity for complete reciprocity and their misunderstanding of British formula.	528
495 To MR. RENDEL Sofia No. 133	May 11	Records conversation with Bulgarian Minister on his return from Sofia: M. Momtchiloff gave his views regarding Balkan situation which he said had changed since occupation of Prague and seizure of Albania.	529
496 To SIR R. HOARE Bucharest No. 242	May 11	Records conversation with Roumanian Minister regarding Anglo-Turkish declaration: M. Tilea was given text of declaration for confidential information of his Government.	531
497 SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 216	May 12	Refers to No. 491 and reports final decision of Turkish Government to adhere to bilateral declaration.	532
498 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 204	May 12	Refers to No. 491 and reports that M. Bonnet has promised to get into immediate personal touch with French Ambassador at Angora in endeavour to reach agreement by afternoon of May 12: M. Bonnet has little hope of success.	533
499 To SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 199	May 12	Refers to Nos. 497 and 500: instructions to inform French Government that if agreement of Turkish Government has not been received to declaration being made in tripartite form it will be made in bipartite form at 3.45 p.m. on May 12: H.M.G. would, if questioned, state that arrangements were being made for Turkish and French Governments to make analogous declaration in near future.	534
500 To SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 178	May 12	Refers to No. 491: instructions to inform Turkish M.F.A. that announcement of declaration will be withheld until 3.45 p.m. in hope that Turkish Government may be able to reach understanding with French Government: if no agreement reached declaration will be made in bipartite form at that time.	534

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
501	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 205	May 12	Refers to No. 499 and reports that French Government agree to explanation which H.M.G. would make if questioned: meanwhile French Ambassador at Angora is continuing to negotiate with Turkish Government.	535
502	SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 217	May 12	Refers to No. 500 and reports point which has arisen should declaration be made in tripartite form.	535
503	SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 218	May 12	Refers to No. 500 and reports that it has proved impossible to reach agreement and declaration will be made in Angora in bilateral form: M.F.A. will allude to conversations in progress with French Government which will reach early conclusion.	535
504	TO SIR P. LORAINÉ Rome Tel. No. 246	May 12	Refers to No. 370: instructions regarding action to be taken should Signor Mussolini suggest that H.M.G. intervene with active assistance with view to settlement of Franco-Italian problems.	536
505	SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 219	May 12	Refers to No. 503 and reports present position regarding Turkish-French negotiations: Turkish Government hope for early settlement after which Franco-Turkish declaration should be possible.	536
506	SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 221	May 12	Reports points from speech of Turkish Prime Minister when making Anglo-Turkish declaration before Grand National Assembly.	537
507	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 46 Saving	May 12	Transmits report by Second Secretary of Embassy on local situation in Danzig and Corridor: political rather than military approach to Danzig problem is thought locally to be most likely unless large-scale military action contemplated by Germany.	538
508	TO SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw No. 297	May 12	Records conversation with Polish Ambassador regarding question of financial assistance to Poland: memorandum left by Count Raczynski containing Poland's <i>desiderata</i> .	539
509	SIR W. SEEDS Moscow No. 143	May 12	Discusses reasons for removal of M. Litvinov from post of Commissar for Foreign Affairs.	542
510	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin	May 12	Letter to Sir A. Cadogan commenting on health of Field-Marshal Göring and possibility of his return to favour with Herr Hitler: first reaction to Prime Minister's speech of May 11 unfriendly.	546

CHAPTER VII

The European situation: further correspondence with the Soviet Government: Anglo-Turkish negotiations: the Danzig question.
(May 13-20, 1939.)

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
511 SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 159	May 13	Reports that Polish press report disorders in Danzig of an anti-Polish nature: official of Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that strong protest had been delivered to Senate.	547
512 SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 222	May 13	Refers to No. 310 regarding Anglo-Turkish negotiations: submits review of position as regards further proceedings now that stage 1, i.e. publication of declaration, has been completed.	547
513 To SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 161	May 13	Refers to Nos. 475 and 476: instructions regarding procedure to be followed in speaking, if opportunity occurs, to members of Higher Command as directed in No. 431.	549
514 SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 225	May 13	Refers to No. 505 and transmits translations of texts discussed between Turkish Government and French Ambassador regarding Hatay question.	549
515 MR. INGRAM Foreign Office	May 13	Minute recording information from Greek Minister regarding (1) anxiety of German Ambassador in Angora by recent developments in Turkey; and (2) position of Yugoslavia and Hungarian-Yugoslav relations.	550
516 To SIR E. PHIPPS Paris No. 1183	May 13	Records conversation with French Ambassador on May 11 regarding protest made by Yugoslav Government against conclusion by Turkey of a guarantee agreement with United Kingdom.	551
517 SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora No. 257	May 13	Refers to No. 310 and transmits copy of reply of Turkish M.F.A. to communication made to him regarding manner in which present Anglo-Turkish negotiations should proceed.	552
518 MR. TROUTBECK Prague No. 173	May 13	Comments on fact that membership of new Czech Government is little different from that of old, and discusses attitude of average Czech towards German occupation: considers that promised autonomy is little better than a sham and economic situation deteriorating week by week.	554
519 SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 160	May 14	Refers to No. 511 and reports reply of Danzig Senate to protest of High Commissioner regarding recent anti-Polish disorders.	557

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
520	SIR W. SEEDS Moscow Tel. No. 93	May 15	Refers to No. 397 and transmits reply of Soviet Government to latest proposals of H.M.G. which are unacceptable to them: reports discussion with M. Molotov regarding Finland and Soviet Government's need for reciprocity.	558
521	TO SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 185	May 15	Authorizes Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen to keep Turkish Government informed of negotiations with U.S.S.R. at his discretion.	559
522	MR. GALLIENNE Tallinn Tel. No. 4 to Riga Tel. No. 4 to F.O.	May 15	Transmits enquiry by Estonian M.F.A. regarding (1) whether H.M.G. have any objections to German proposals for non-aggression pact; and (2) whether in event of general war H.M.G. could exercise influence on Soviet Government to abstain from any aggressive policy towards Estonia.	560
523	MR. SHEPHERD Danzig Tel. No. 41	May 15	Refers to No. 507 and concurs generally in conclusions expressed therein, but points out possibility of German occupation of Danzig from sea: reports rumours that German infantry and marines have been smuggled into Danzig and that <i>coup</i> is imminent.	560
524	MR. WALTERS Geneva	May 15	Minute recording information from High Commissioner of Danzig regarding his conversation with German Consul-General: latter stated that German Government were anxious for High Commissioner's return to Danzig.	561
525	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 374	May 16	Refers to No. 431 and reports observations made to State Secretary regarding determination of H.M.G. to implement their guarantee to Poland if compelled to do so by German unilateral action in respect of Danzig or Corridor.	562
526	SIR R. CAMPBELL Belgrade Tel. No. 113	May 16	Reports that press is reprinting extensively German comments on Anglo-Turkish agreement and that British point of view has had little or no publicity: asks that British point of view be explained to Yugoslav correspondents in London.	563
527	SIR R. VANSITTART Foreign Office	May 16	Minute recording conversation with Soviet Ambassador regarding Soviet Government's wish for inclusion of Baltic States in pact.	564
528	MR. STRANG Foreign Office	May 16	Minute recording conversation with M. Cambon of French Embassy regarding negotiations with Soviet Government: French Government anxious to be informed of terms of H.M.G.'s reply to latest Soviet communication before it is handed to Soviet Government.	565

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
529 SIR P. LORAINÉ Rome No. 442	May 16	Reports information from Belgian Ambassador regarding his conversation with Count Ciano: latter had told him that he thought Europe was in danger of war for which he blamed aggressive encirclement policy of Great Britain and France. Comments on view of Count Kerchove that Anglo-French diplomacy may frighten Axis into making war before odds against them become too great.	566
530 SIR W. SEEDS Moscow No. 148	May 16	Refers to No. 520 and reports fully interview with M. Molotov summarized therein.	567
531 FRENCH AMBASSADOR London	May 16	Letter to Secretary of State pointing out dangers of deadlock in Anglo-Soviet negotiations and urging necessity of bringing them to a successful conclusion: M. Bonnet requests that formula suggested by French Government should be examined in connexion with preparation of British reply to Soviet Government.	569
532 SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw	May 16	Letter to Sir A. Cadogan commenting on No. 366 regarding information given to Sir N. Henderson by Italian Ambassador that whole trouble between Germany and Poland was based on Slovakia issue.	570
533 SIR W. SEEDS Moscow	May 16	Letter to Sir L. Oliphant discussing effect of M. Litvinov's disappearance on Anglo-Soviet negotiations and expressing concern regarding manner in which Soviet Ambassador in Paris was supplied with text of French reply (see No. 351).	571
534 TO MR. GALLIENNE Tallinn Tel. No. 1	May 17	Records reply given to Estonian Chargé d'Affaires in answer to enquiry regarding Soviet Government's desire to include Estonia in a Three-Power guarantee of certain States of Central and Eastern Europe.	572
535 SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 233	May 17	Refers to No. 521 and reports that M.F.A. seems to be fully informed from Moscow: transmits explanation of Turkish Ambassador in Moscow of attitude of Soviet Government and reports that M.F.A. considers that Soviet Government desire to co-operate with H.M.G. if only their suspicions and certain difficulties can be dispelled.	573
536 SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 234	May 17	Reports information from M.F.A. regarding his conversation with German Ambassador and efforts of Herr von Papen to induce Turkish Government not to commit themselves to definite agreement with H.M.G.	574

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
537 To SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 188	May 17	Refers to No. 512 and transmits views of H.M.G. regarding stage 2 in negotiations: considers it essential that undertakings which Turkish Government have or will assume <i>vis-d-vis</i> Greece and Roumania should be in harmony with undertakings which H.M.G. have assumed towards these countries.	574
538 Mr. SHEPHERD Danzig Tel. No. 8 Saving	May 17	Reports result of investigations into infiltration into Danzig of German military forces, arms, and ammunition: suggests possible line of action by Germany with view to regaining Danzig and avoiding any action by Poland.	576
539 To SIR E. PHIPPS Paris No. 1216	May 17	Records conversation with M. Corbin regarding (1) progress of negotiations with Soviet Government and French Government's anxiety lest deadlock should result; (2) Franco-Turkish negotiations regarding Hatay; and (3) Franco-Italian relations.	577
540 SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw No. 132	May 17	Transmits minute by Military Attaché which explains how strategic position of Poland would be compromised by return of Danzig to Reich and remilitarization of Free State territory: sets forth various considerations, apart from military ones, which to Polish Government render a one-sided or dictated settlement of Danzig question a clear threat to their independence: discusses various possibilities which might lead to way out of present impasse.	579
541 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin No. 574	May 17	Reviews question of Danzig and Corridor and discusses probable significance of comparative calm in German propaganda activities on this subject: considers that Herr Hitler will be obliged to obtain some settlement of problem before September.	584
542 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin	May 17	Letter to Secretary of State discussing possible significance of prevailing lull in general situation and advantages of utilizing it for settling differences between France and Italy: transmits views on question whether Nazi movement can settle down.	586
543 SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw	May 17	Letter to Sir A. Cadogan describing action he has taken to restrain any ill-advised or hasty action on part of Poles and explaining difficulty of obtaining from M. Beck clear statement of what Polish Government propose to do in certain eventualities: suggests desirability of putting Polish case before British public and urges need for adequate financial assistance for Poles.	587

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
544	SIR R. CAMPBELL Belgrade Tel. No. 114	May 18	Reports account of visit to Rome of Prince Regent and M.F.A.: no important demands made to Yugoslavia except desire expressed that she should leave League of Nations: general impression gained was that Signor Mussolini was terrified of war and was using all his influence in Berlin and Warsaw to counsel prudence over Danzig.	588
545	TO SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 191	May 18	States that there will be a debate on May 19 which will include discussions of Anglo-Turkish declaration: records reply which it is proposed to make regarding definition of Mediterranean area if Turkish Government have no objection.	589
546	SIR W. SEEDS Moscow Tel. No. 97	May 18	Comments on No. 535 and states that tendency of Soviet Government to ask for more and more guarantees, as in case of Finland, make him wonder whether they are now serious.	589
547	TO MR. GALLIENNE Tallinn Tel. No. 2	May 18	Refers to No. 522 and transmits replies of H.M.G. to questions raised by Estonian M.F.A.	590
548	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 207	May 18	Reports information from M.F.A. that French formula for assistance to or by Russia in certain circumstances was never meant by French Government to apply to States other than Poland, Roumania, or Turkey.	590
549	SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 238	May 18	Refers to No. 537 and transmits comments of M.F.A. on question of undertakings to Greece and Roumania.	591
550	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 307 Saving	May 18	Reports that French Government will be happy to support at Moscow revised formula that H.M.G. may decide to propose to Soviet Government.	591
551	SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora No. 270	May 18	Reports Turkish Government's attitude to Herr von Papen and dismay of latter at advanced state of British negotiations with Turkey, which he has endeavoured to persuade Turkish Government to halt.	592
552	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin	May 18	Letter to Sir A. Cadogan enclosing a memorandum by Military Attaché reporting information which appears to show that Germany is endeavouring to come to terms with U.S.S.R. General Sirovy reported to have arrived in Moscow on behalf of German Government three days before M. Litvinov's resignation.	594
553	TO SIR R. CAMPBELL Belgrade Tel. No. 147	May 19	Refers to No. 526 and states that Reuter telegraphed full report regarding Anglo-Turkish agreement and that it seems clear that reasons for unsatisfactory comments are to be found in Belgrade: Press Attaché to Yugoslav Legation being approached in matter however.	595

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
554 To SIR W. SEEDS Moscow Tel. No. 111	May 19	Refers to No. 520: instructions to inform Soviet Government that their reply is being considered and H.M.G. hope to make a communication to them after Cabinet meeting on May 24: in meantime Secretary of State hopes to discuss matter with Soviet Ambassador at Geneva.	595
555 SIR R. CAMPBELL Belgrade Tel. No. 115	May 19	Reports conversation with M.F.A. regarding attitude of Yugoslav Government and press towards Anglo-Turkish declaration: advances reasons for annoyance of Yugoslav Government in matter.	596
556 To SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 165 To SIR R. HOARE Bucharest Tel. No. 232	May 19	Refers to No. 304 and explains difficulties which have arisen in connexion with Anglo-Soviet negotiations: instructions to inform Polish/Roumanian Government accordingly and enquire view of Polish/Roumanian Government regarding new formula proposed by H.M.G. with view to avoiding breakdown in negotiations.	597
557 SIR P. LORAINE Rome Tel. No. 471	May 19	Reports conversation with M.F.A. prior to his departure for Berlin to sign Italian-German Alliance on May 22: Count Ciano's remarks seemed to confirm report that series of recent French press comments on weakening of Axis precipitated Italian alliance with Germany.	598
558 To SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 21 Saving	May 19	Outlines position regarding maintenance of contact between H.M.G. and Polish Government concerning possible German action in Danzig: states that it is not proposed to press M. Beck further in matter, but that Secretary of State relies on Sir H. Kennard to keep in close touch with M. Beck and make sure that he is informed at earliest possible stage of any steps contemplated by Polish Government to counteract German action in Danzig.	599
559 To SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin No. 1000	May 19	Records conversation with German Ambassador regarding (1) German feeling about encirclement and change in British public opinion as regards Germany; (2) Danzig question; and (3) possibility of improving Anglo-German relations.	600
560 To SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin No. 1002	May 19	Records conversation with German Ambassador regarding possibility of getting German and British press to moderate their tone.	603
561 SIR W. SEEDS Moscow Tel. No. 98	May 20	Refers to No. 546 and reports wishes of Soviet Government regarding Baltic region as stated by Turkish Ambassador, who based himself on conversation with M. Potemkin.	604
562 To SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 166	May 20	Transmits text of <i>aide-memoire</i> handed to Polish Ambassador in reply to his memorandum of May 12 on subject of financial assistance to Poland.	604

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
563	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 169	May 20	Reports information from German Ambassador regarding anti-German disturbances at Tomaszow: steps being taken by Polish Government to see that local authorities take every precaution to prevent such occurrences.	605
564	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 167	May 20	Refers to No. 538 and reports conversation with M.F.A. regarding (1) rumours of infiltration of German military elements into Danzig; and (2) proposed negotiations with Senate about certain economic questions, more especially quotas.	606
565	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 166	May 20	Reports information from M.F.A. that Hungarian Government have confidentially communicated to him that they have informed Reich that in event of hostilities between Germany and Poland, Germany cannot count on Hungarian aid either as regards its army or passage across its territory.	606
566	TO SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 196	May 20	Records references to Turkish negotiations made in Prime Minister's speech on May 19 in House of Commons.	606
567	SIR R. HOARE Bucharest Tel. No. 220	May 20	Refers to No. 556 regarding Anglo-Soviet negotiations and states that M.F.A. promises prompt reply: reports M.F.A.'s personal reactions to formula proposed by H.M.G.	607
568	MR. SHEPHERD Danzig Tel. No. 9 Saving	May 20	Refers to No. 538 and reports certain occurrences which lead him to think that an attempt may be made shortly—possibly at beginning of June when Dr. Goebbels advertised to visit Danzig—to solve Danzig problem by <i>fait accompli</i> as suggested in telegram under reference.	608
569	RECORD OF CONVERSATION	May 20	Extract from Record of Conversation between Secretary of State and MM. Daladier and Bonnet at Ministry of War in Paris on May 20: question of Anglo-Polish Agreement and Danzig problem discussed.	608
570	RECORD OF CONVERSATION	May 20	Extract from Record of Conversation between Secretary of State and MM. Daladier and Bonnet regarding Franco-Italian relations.	611
571	TO SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora No. 274	May 20	Records information from Greek Minister regarding remarks made by Hungarian M.F.A. to Turkish Minister in Budapest on subject of Anglo-Turkish negotiations and reasons why Italy had occupied Albania.	614
572	TO SIR S. WATERLOW Athens No. 231	May 20	Records conversation with Greek Minister who expressed anxiety of his Government regarding concentration of Italian troops on Greek border. M. Simopoulos informed of opinion of H.M.G. that Greek Government's fears were groundless.	615

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
573 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin No. 595	May 20	Discusses Germany's aims in light of past events.	616

CHAPTER VIII

The European situation: Anglo-Russian negotiations: the Danzig Question. (May 21-26, 1939.)

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
574 TO UNITED KINGDOM DELEGATION Geneva Tel. No. 6	May 21	States that information has been received that Herr Schnurre is leaving Berlin for Moscow on May 22 to negotiate Commercial Agreement with Soviet Government: suggests that M. Maisky be asked for information in regard to visit.	622
575 SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 170	May 21	Reports information from Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding incident at Polish Customs House at Kalthof as result of which Polish chauffeur shot one of assailants dead.	622
576 UNITED KINGDOM DELEGATION Geneva Tel. No. 8	May 21	Transmits account of Secretary of State's conversation with French Ministers regarding negotiations with Soviet Government: draft outline of a direct triple pact and new draft based on French proposal of May 3 discussed.	623
577 MR. SHEPHERD Danzig Tel. No. 42	May 21	Reports that following renewed anti-Polish demonstrations at Kalthof German resident of village was shot by chauffeur of car in which Polish officials went to investigate demonstrations: formal protests made by both sides.	625
578 UNITED KINGDOM DELEGATION Geneva Tel. No. 9	May 21	Refers to No. 576 and transmits text of new draft based on French proposal of May 3.	626
579 SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 171	May 21	Refers to No. 575 and transmits further details regarding incident at Kalthof received from M. Beck's Chef de Cabinet.	626
580 RECORD OF CONVERSATION	May 21	Record of Conversation between Secretary of State and High Commissioner for Danzig in Geneva on May 21 regarding Danzig situation.	627
581 UNITED KINGDOM DELEGATION Geneva Tel. No. 10 (Part I)	May 22	Refers to No. 576 and transmits account of conversation of Secretary of State with M. Maisky regarding latest British proposals and possibilities of agreement being reached between H.M.G. and Soviet Government.	630

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	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
582	UNITED KINGDOM DELEGATION Geneva Tel. No. 10 (Part II)	May 22	Continuation of No. 581.	632
583	SIR W. SEEDS Moscow Tel. No. 99	May 22	Reports information from M. Potemkin that there was no truth in report of Herr Schnurre's visit to Moscow.	634
584	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 172	May 22	Refers to No. 558: considers that M. Beck is acting up to assurances given and that Polish Government is fully alive to danger of falling into German trap to put them in the wrong with public opinion of world: transmits views regarding most practical solution for present state of uneasy peace.	634
585	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 378	May 22	Refers to Nos. 575 and 579 and reports German version of Kalthof incident which is at complete variance with Polish version.	635
586	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 173	May 22	Refers to No. 556 regarding Anglo-Soviet negotiations and reports modification proposed by M.F.A. in wording of paragraph 4(b) of formula: transmits certain general observations of M. Beck on question of negotiations.	636
587	UNITED KINGDOM DELEGATION Geneva Tel. Unnumbered	May 22	Transmits account of Secretary of State's conversation with Polish Minister at Berne regarding Danzig: latter said that Polish Government could be relied on not to do anything imprudent.	637
588	UNITED KINGDOM DELEGATION Tel. No. 15 Saving	May 22	Refers to No. 569 and transmits account of Secretary of State's conversation with French Foreign Minister regarding obligations entered into by France and Great Britain towards Poland.	638
589	FOREIGN OFFICE	May 22	Memorandum on Anglo-Soviet negotiations in which question of advantages and disadvantages of pact discussed.	639
590	SIR W. SEEDS Moscow No. 154	May 22	Refers to No. 554 and reports interview with M. Potemkin when message contained therein conveyed to him.	647
591	UNITED KINGDOM DELEGATION Geneva Tel. No. 11	May 23	Transmits account of conversation of Secretary of State with Latvian M.F.A. who suggested that any arrangements reached between Great Britain, France, and U.S.S.R. might, if they covered Baltic States, take form of some kind of guarantee of neutrality: draft text of possible arrangement on these lines set forth in immediately following telegram.	648
592	UNITED KINGDOM DELEGATION Tel. No. 12	May 23	Refers to No. 591 and transmits text of draft referred to therein.	649

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
593 SIR P. LORAINÉ Rome Tel. No. 476	May 23	Expresses anxiety regarding situation following Signor Mussolini's recent speeches and urges that Secretary of State or Prime Minister should make some public statement which would show that H.M.G. were ready to talk on any wide and mutually acceptable basis: suggests form which statement might take.	650
594 SIR H. KNATCHBULL-HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 241	May 23	Reports information from Secretary-General of Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding (1) efforts of German Chargé d'Affaires to induce Turkish Government not to conclude definitive agreement with H.M.G.: (2) enquiry of German Chargé d'Affaires regarding attitude of Turkey in event of Germany becoming involved in hostilities, and in event of plebiscite in Danzig resulting in demand for union with Germany followed by Polish march on Danzig.	652
595 SIR R. HOARE Bucharest Tel. No. 223	May 23	Refers to Nos. 556 and 567 regarding Anglo-Soviet negotiations and transmits reply of Roumanian Government to enquiry addressed to them concerning proposed formula.	652
596 TO SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 169	May 23	Puts forward suggestion that Scandinavian States might be asked to mediate in Danzig question: enquires views as to Polish Government's willingness to accept such mediation and suggests that if it is thought desirable question might be put to M.F.A.	653
597 UNITED KINGDOM DELEGATION Geneva Tel. No. 23 Saving	May 23	Message from Secretary of State stating that it has been decided by Committee of Three that High Commissioner should start for Danzig on May 24 travelling by way of Warsaw and return to Geneva about June 8 or 9 by way of Berlin.	654
598 SIR P. LORAINÉ Rome Tel. No. 176 Saving	May 23	Reports information regarding reason for German-Italian Treaty of Alliance: comments on provisions of agreement and Signor Mussolini's relations with Herr Hitler: inclines to view that Alliance is preferable to Axis.	654
599 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 209 Saving	May 23	Reports reception given to Count Ciano on occasion of his visit to Berlin.	656
600 RECORD OF CONVERSATION	May 23	Extract from Record of Conversation between Secretary of State and M. Cretzianu at Geneva regarding attitude of Poland to current Soviet negotiations.	657
601 RECORD OF CONVERSATION	May 23	Extract from Record of Conversation between Secretary of State and M. Cretzianu regarding Anglo-Soviet negotiations.	658

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
602 RECORD OF CONVERSATION	May 23	Extract from Record of Conversation between Secretary of State and M. Cretzianu regarding Yugoslavia and Anglo-Turkish declaration.	659
603 SIR P. LORAINÉ Rome No. 463	May 23	Reports conversation with French Ambassador regarding question of Franco-Italian relations: comments on French Government's reluctance to open conversations with Italian Government and points to seriousness of situation: refers to suggestion made in No. 593 which might ease matters.	663
604 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin	May 23	Letter to Sir A. Cadogan discussing question of Danzig and stating his opinion that it is bound to go to Germany sooner or later.	665
605 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin	May 23	Letter to Mr. Kirkpatrick asking for copies of White Book on Czecho-Slovakia of 1938 and enquiring whether Foreign Office or H.M.G. have any views as to right solution for Danzig question.	666
606 SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 243	May 24	Comments on No. 555 regarding attitude of Yugoslav Government towards Anglo-Turkish declaration.	666
607 SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 176	May 24	Comments on suggestion in No. 596 that Scandinavian States might be asked to mediate between Polish and German Governments regarding question of Danzig.	667
608 TO SIR W. SEEDS Moscow Tel. No. 116	May 24	Transmits text of statement made in House of Commons regarding Anglo-Soviet negotiations.	668
609 TO SIR W. SEEDS Moscow Tel. No. 117	May 24	Refers to No. 554 and records H.M.G.'s view that effective co-operation between Soviet, French, and British Governments against aggression in Europe might be based on system of mutual guarantees in general conformity with principles of League of Nations: instructions to inform Soviet Government accordingly and to tell them that outline of formula which would give effect to principles indicated will be communicated to them shortly.	668
610 TO MR. ORDE Riga Tel. No. 21 TO MR. SNOW Helsingfors Tel. No. 33	May 24	Instructions to inform Latvian and Estonian Governments/Finnish Government of latest proposal for measures against aggression which is to be put to Soviet Government, and to inform them that there would be no idea of inserting in formula any unsolicited guarantee of Baltic States, who would not be mentioned by name.	669

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
611	TO SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 176 TO SIR R. HOARE Bucharest Tel. No. 243	May 24	Refers to Nos. 586 and 595 and records conclusion which H.M.G. have now arrived at regarding best means of ensuring effective co-operation against aggression in Europe: formula embodying proposals being submitted to Soviet Government and text will be telegraphed simultaneously for communication to Polish/Roumanian Government.	670
612	TO SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 223 Saving	May 24	Refers to No. 609: instructions to inform French Government that formula will be communicated to them for their concurrence before it is submitted to Soviet Government.	670
613	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 211 Saving	May 24	Summarizes speech by Field-Marshal Göring on occasion of opening of new air-raid precautions school at Wannsee: hope expressed that Italo-German Pact would contribute towards maintenance of peace.	671
614	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 212 Saving	May 24	Reports comment on Anglo-Turkish agreement in 'Völkischer Beobachter' of May 24 which attempts to prove that Turkey, in concluding agreement, had renounced principle of neutrality and violated foundation on which Balkan Entente rested.	671
615	TO SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora No. 289	May 24	Records conversation of Turkish Ambassador with Sir A. Cadogan during course of which M. Aras mentioned suggestion that President İnönü had outlined to him for a Franco-Soviet-British-Turkish 'declaration of solidarity against aggression'. Sir A. Cadogan expressed opinion that as it did not amount to more than a consultative pact Soviet Government might not agree to it.	672
616	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin No. 603E	May 24	Comments on his Annual Economic and Financial Report on Germany for 1938 which shows critical situation with which Germany is confronted.	673
617	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin No. 610	May 24	Reports conversation with Herr von Papen during course of which latter spoke of H.M.G.'s policy of encirclement: question of Danzig also discussed.	674
618	SIR R. CAMPBELL Belgrade Tel. No. 120	May 25	Transmits account of meeting between Yugoslav and Roumanian Ministers for Foreign Affairs received from Roumanian Minister: question of Prince Regent's visit to Rome, Anglo-Turkish declaration, and Balkan Entente discussed.	676
619	SIR R. CAMPBELL Belgrade Tel. No. 121	May 25	Refers to No. 618 and suggests that it might be well to take no action beyond that reported in paragraph 4 of No. 606 in direction of urging Turkish Government to give further explanations to Yugoslav Government regarding Anglo-Turkish declaration.	677

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
620	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 177	May 25	Refers to No. 611 and reports comments of M.F.A. thereon: asks that point regarding inversion of order of contingencies named in paragraph 4 of No. 556 be reconsidered.	677
621	UNITED KINGDOM DELEGATION Geneva Tel. No. 16	May 25	Refers to No. 609 and reports that information contained therein was communicated to M. Maisky in form of memorandum: latter said he thought agreement should now prove possible.	678
622	TO SIR W. SEEDS Moscow Tel. No. 118	May 25	Refers to No. 609 and states that immediately following telegrams contain text of draft agreement and explanatory memorandum.	678
623	SIR W. SEEDS Moscow Tel. No. 100	May 25	Reports that message contained in No. 609 handed to M. Potemkin on May 25; latter made no comment beyond wondering what precisely was implicated by reference to League of Nations principles.	678
624	TO SIR W. SEEDS Moscow Tel. No. 119	May 25	Refers to No. 622 and transmits text of draft agreement referred to therein.	679
625	TO SIR W. SEEDS Moscow Tel. No. 120	May 25	Refers to No. 622 and transmits explanatory memorandum referred to therein.	680
626	SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 249	May 25	Reports information from M.F.A. regarding conversation between Yugoslav and Roumanian Ministers for Foreign Affairs, summary of which will be telegraphed later; transmits views of M.F.A. regarding attitude of Yugoslav and Roumanian Governments towards Anglo-Turkish negotiations.	681
627	TO SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 208	May 25	States that draft for interim understanding has been prepared and that it is hoped to transmit it early next week.	682
628	TO SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 179	May 25	Instructions to see M. Burckhardt when he arrives in Warsaw and urge him to use his best endeavours to establish <i>détente</i> between German and Polish Governments regarding Danzig.	682
629	FRENCH AMBASSADOR London	May 25	Letter to Sir A. Cadogan informing him that French Government propose to make a communication to Soviet Ambassador in Paris as soon as they are advised that Sir W. Seeds has received instructions to communicate text of tripartite agreement to Soviet Government.	683
630	TO FRENCH AMBASSADOR London	May 25	Refers to No. 629 and informs French Ambassador of Lord Halifax's suggestion that French Government might instruct their Ambassador in Moscow to make joint <i>démarche</i> with H.M. Ambassador there: formula could at same time be communicated to Soviet Ambassador in Paris.	683

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
631	TO SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin	May 25	Letter from Mr. Kirkpatrick forwarding six copies of White Paper on Czecho-Slovakia as requested in No. 605: transmits views of Foreign Office regarding Danzig situation and suggests personal solution which might find favour with H.M.G.	684
632	TO MR. OSBORNE Vatican Tel. No. 18	May 26	Refers to No. 487 and discusses question of assistance which His Holiness might be able to give in assisting German-Polish negotiations on questions outstanding between the two countries.	685
633	SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 250	May 26	Refers to No. 626 and reports account of conversation between Yugoslav and Roumanian Ministers for Foreign Affairs referred to therein.	686
634	TO SIR W. SEEDS Moscow Tel. No. 123	May 26	Instructions regarding communication to Soviet Government of draft agreement contained in No. 624.	688
635	TO SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 182 TO SIR R. HOARE Bucharest Tel. No. 247 TO MR. ORDE Riga Tel. No. 23 TO MR. SNOW Helsingfors Tel. No. 37	May 26	Refers to No. 634: instructions regarding communication to Government to which accredited of text of draft agreement with Soviet Government.	689
636	TO SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 180	May 26	Instructions to consult with M. Beck on action which it would be advisable for Polish Government to take should German Government effect <i>coup</i> in Danzig.	690
637	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 179	May 26	Reports that somewhat unfortunate impression has been created by communiqué of May 25 emanating from Reuter's diplomatic correspondent in London regarding negotiations with Soviet Government: transmits translation of P.A.T. communiqué issued on May 26 in this connexion.	691
638	TO SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 227 Saving	May 26	Refers to No. 593 and asks Sir E. Phipps whether he considers that a personal letter from Prime Minister to M. Daladier would have any chance of inducing latter to modify negative attitude which he adopted in his conversation with Secretary of State on May 20.	691
639	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 213 Saving	May 26	Reports that although publicity continues to be given to the Danzig and other Polish incidents they appear for present not to be exploited to their full extent: transmits press comments on (1) latest	692

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
		incident; (2) alleged arrogance of Polish comment on Italy's adhesion to Italo-German Military Alliance, and (3) neglected condition of Vistula.	
640 SIR A. CADOGAN Foreign Office	May 26	Minute recording telephone message from French Ambassador that French Government had agreed to draft formula for agreement with U.S.S.R. and that French Chargé d'Affaires in Moscow was being instructed to join H.M. Ambassador in making joint communication of formula to Soviet Government.	693
641 SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora No. 285	May 26	Transmits copy of letter from M.F.A. defining juridical position of Turkey <i>vis-à-vis</i> aggression against Greece: defines also position as regards Roumania, Mediterranean, and Balkan area.	693
642 MR. GALLIENNE Tallinn No. 67	May 26	Transmits copy despatch No. 161 of May 26 addressed to H.M. Minister, Riga, respecting Estonian foreign policy.	696
643 FRENCH AMBASSADOR London	May 26	Letter to Secretary of State confirming telephone message to Sir A. Cadogan regarding draft formula for agreement with U.S.S.R. (No. 640).	698
644 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin	May 26	Letter to Sir H. Kennard, Warsaw, commenting on his letter to Sir A. Cadogan of May 16 (No. 532).	699

CHAPTER IX

The European situation: Anglo-Italian relations: the Position in Danzig: decision to send Mr. Strang to Moscow: Anglo-French proposals to Soviet Government. (May 27–June 7, 1939.)

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
645 SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 214	May 27	Reports anxiety of M.F.A. that precise terms of Anglo-Polish Agreement should be drawn up as soon as possible, so as to enable French Government to draw up definite terms of Franco-Polish Agreement.	700
646 MR. ORDE Riga Tel. No. 16	May 27	Refers to No. 610 and reports reaction of Secretary-General of Ministry of Foreign Affairs to communication made to him.	700
647 TO SIR R. HOARE Bucharest Tel. No. 252	May 27	Instructions regarding representations to be made to Roumanian Government if it is fact that they have urged Turkish Government that Anglo-Turkish Agreement should not be carried further particularly in so far as concerned Balkans.	701

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
648	SIR W. SEEDS Moscow Tel. No. 103	May 27	Refers to No. 624 and summarizes interview with M. Molotov who stated that he had already studied proposal of which he had received copy from Paris: his personal reaction was unfavourable but he would report to his Government and communicate answer in due course.	701
649	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 180	May 27	Refers to No. 635 and reports M. Beck's reactions to text of proposed draft agreement with U.S.S.R.	702
650	TO SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 232 Saving	May 27	Refers to conversation with M. Daladier on May 20 (see No. 570) regarding Franco-Italian relations during which M. Daladier seemed to suggest that in certain circumstances he might be ready to make some concessions to Italy: instructions to enquire whether French Government would like H.M.G. to sound Italians regarding matter.	703
651	SIR P. LORAINE Rome Tel. No. 483	May 28	Reports essence of conversation with Signor Mussolini who requested that question should be put to H.M.G. whether, in view of Anglo-Turkish declaration and impending treaty with U.S.S.R., Anglo-Italian Agreement had any further value.	703
652	SIR P. LORAINE Rome Tel. No. 484	May 28	Refers to No. 651 and reports details of interview with Signor Mussolini: alleged policy of encirclement and question of Danzig discussed.	704
653	SIR P. LORAINE Rome Tel. No. 485	May 28	Refers to Nos. 651 and 652 and comments on his interview with Signor Mussolini.	707
654	SIR W. SEEDS Moscow Tel. No. 104	May 28	Refers to No. 648 and reports information from Turkish Ambassador regarding M. Molotov's question to him whether Turkish Government considered themselves bound by Anglo-Turkish declaration in matter of possible war in Mediterranean even though definite agreement not yet concluded.	707
655	SIR R. HOARE Bucharest Tel. No. 225	May 28	Comments on instructions contained in No. 647.	708
656	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 49 Saving	May 28	Reports information from M. Burckhardt regarding his conversation with M. Beck concerning Danzig. Suggestion for temporary solution of problem as outlined in No. 584 discussed with M. Burckhardt who agreed with it generally: Sir H. Kennard asks whether he may put forward suggestion to M. Beck.	709
657	SIR W. SEEDS Moscow No. 156	May 28	Refers to No. 648 and submits full report of interview of himself and French Chargé d'Affaires with M. Molotov.	710

NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
658 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin No. 613	May 28	Reports visit to Field-Marshal Göring at Karinhall on May 27: Anglo-German relations, annexation of Bohemia and Moravia, question of Danzig, and possibilities of war discussed.	713
659 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin	May 28	Letter to Secretary of State referring to No. 658: further points in conversation including Field-Marshal Göring's remarks regarding possibility of friendship between Germany and England and German economic position which was such that choice lay between big increase in taxation or war. Discusses steps it might be possible to take to improve situation.	716
660 SIR P. LORAINÉ Rome Tel. No. 487	May 29	Refers to No. 652 and reports three points made by Signor Mussolini regarding guarantees given by Great Britain, policy of encirclement, and Anglo-Italian Agreement.	718
661 MR. OSBORNE Vatican Tel. No. 32	May 29	Refers to No. 632 and reports conversation with Cardinal Secretary of State regarding situation: Pope anxious to do all in his power on behalf of peace: discusses question of German-Polish and Franco-Italian relations and how steps might be taken to improve them.	718
662 TO SIR W. SEEDS Moscow Tel. No. 126	May 29	Refers to No. 648 and explains attitude of H.M.G. in regard to League principles and military conversations: H.M.G. ready to give complete reciprocity and guarantee immediate effective support and have no other aim.	719
663 SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 258	May 29	Refers to Nos. 647 and 655 and reports information from Roumanian Minister that he had received instructions to urge Turkish Government to proceed no further as regards Balkans before M. Gafencu's visit to Angora on June 1.	720
664 SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin	May 29	Letter to Mr. Kirkpatrick acknowledging No. 631 and suggesting possible solution for Danzig and Corridor problem.	720
665 SIR W. SEEDS Moscow Tel. No. 105	May 30	Refers to No. 662 and summarizes reactions of M. Molotov to explanations given to him.	722
666 SIR R. HOARE Bucharest Tel. No. 227	May 30	Refers to No. 655 and reports information from Secretary-General regarding communications between Turkish M.F.A. and and M. Gafencu: latter repeated his warm approval of agreement and stressed fact that his one purpose in explaining anxiety of Yugoslav Government to maintain 'independence' was to maintain solidarity of Balkan Entente: matter to be discussed with Turkish Government in Angora in June.	723

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
667	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 386	May 30	Reports press reaction to prospect of Anglo-Soviet pact: comments on attitude of Government and party circles.	723
668	MR. KIRKPATRICK Foreign Office	May 30	Minute recording conversation with M. Cambon regarding report that Herr von Ribbentrop was pressing hard for an understanding with U.S.S.R.	724
669	FRENCH EMBASSY London	May 30	Note conveying information respecting conversation of Roumanian and Yugoslav Ministers for Foreign Affairs regarding Anglo-Turkish declaration.	724
670	SIR W. SEEDS Moscow No. 161	May 30	Refers to No. 665 and reports in detail interview with M. Molotov summarized therein.	725
671	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin	May 30	Letter to Secretary of State commenting on No. 559; discusses question of how Anglo-German relations might be improved.	728
672	SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 262	May 31	Reports further information from M.F.A. regarding M. Gafencu's attitude to Anglo-Turkish declaration in so far as it concerned Balkans.	729
673	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 216	May 31	Refers to No. 650 and states that in view of Sir P. Loraine's account of his interview with Signor Mussolini (Nos. 651-3) he does not propose to act on instructions contained in telegram under reference until further instructions received.	730
674	MR. ORDE Riga Tel. No. 17	May 31	Refers to No. 635 and reports action taken.	730
675	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 184	May 31	Refers to No. 636 and reports views of M. Beck regarding action to be taken should Germany attempt to change international status of Danzig: M.F.A. would be grateful to know what preparatory military measures H.M.G. would envisage in order to reinforce any <i>démarche</i> at Berlin.	730
676	TO SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 187	May 31	Refers to No. 656 and authorizes submission of suggestion in question to M. Beck.	731
677	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 185	May 31	Refers to No. 675 and states that he doubts whether military authorities would allow M. Beck to go further than he has done in assurances: reports further points made by M. Beck.	732
678	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 223 Saving	May 31	Refers to No. 598 and comments on German-Italian alliance.	732
679	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 51 Saving	May 31	Refers to No. 579 and summarizes letter addressed to Danzig Senate by Polish Commissioner in Danzig in reply to protest of former regarding Kalthof incident.	733

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	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
680	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw	May 31	Letter to Sir A. Cadogan urging need for financial and economic assistance to Poland.	734
681	SIR W. SEEDS Moscow Tel. No. 109	June 1	Submits considered views on present position regarding negotiations for agreement.	736
682	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 217	June 1	Reports information from M.F.A. regarding conversation of French Ambassador in Moscow with M. Molotov regarding negotiations for agreement: M. Naggiar derived impression that chief difficulty will be question of guarantee to Baltic States.	737
683	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 218	June 1	Reports information from M.F.A. regarding conversation of French Ambassador in Rome with Count Ciano: no progress had been made with Franco-Italian conversations.	737
684	TO SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 216	June 1	Refers to No. 687 and transmits text of draft interim understanding for consideration by Turkish Government.	738
685	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 187	June 1	Refers to No. 676 and reports reactions of M. Beck to suggestion regarding temporary solution of Danzig problem.	739
686	SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 268	June 1	Refers to No. 672 and reports substance of M.F.A.'s reply to Roumanian representations.	739
687	TO SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 215	June 1	Refers to No. 549 and explains reasons for including clause about Greece in text of draft for interim understanding contained in immediately following telegram: stresses importance to H.M.G. of direct guarantee to Roumania by Turkish Government and trusts that it will be possible to persuade Turkish Government to agree to this.	740
688	TO SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 217	June 1	Points out that in defining juridical position of H.M.G. as regards Greece, Turkish M.F.A. does not mention condition that H.M.G.'s obligation also depends on action being taken which clearly threatens independence of Greece.	743
689	SIR W. SEEDS Moscow Tel. Unnumbered	June 1	Transmits extracts from M. Molotov's speech of May 31 to Supreme Council of U.S.S.R. regarding Soviet negotiations with Great Britain and France and commercial relations with Germany.	743
690	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 326 Saving	June 1	Reports information from M.F.A. that negotiations for Franco-Turkish Agreement were practically concluded and that he hoped Agreement would be signed on June 5.	746

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
691	SIR O. SARGENT Foreign Office	June 1	Records conversation with Roumanian Minister who (1) renewed request of Roumanian Government that Roumania should not be mentioned by name in any Anglo-Russian agreement; and (2) asked that H.M.G. would, if possible, prevent M. Titulesco, who was arriving in London on June 1, from giving public utterance to his views on Russia.	746
692	TO SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw No. 351	June 1	Records representations made by Polish Ambassador regarding response of H.M.G. to Polish Government's request for financial assistance. Ambassador informed, in reply to enquiry, that question of definitive agreement between Great Britain and Poland now being taken up and that it was hoped to send proposals shortly to Polish Government.	747
693	SIR A. RYAN Durazzo No. 82	June 1	Refers to No. 572 and submits certain considerations which would appear to show that fears of Greek Government regarding Italian intentions cannot be dismissed as entirely groundless.	750
694	SIR P. LORAINÉ Rome Tel. No. 489	June 2	Refers to Nos. 651 and 652 and asks when reply may be expected to Signor Mussolini's question regarding value of Anglo-Italian Agreement.	752
695	TO SIR R. HOARE Bucharest Tel. No. 256	June 2	Instructions not to act on No. 647 regarding Roumanian <i>démarche</i> at Angora, in view of information contained in No. 633.	752
696	MR. SHEPHERD Danzig Tel. No. 24 Saving	June 2	Reports information from High Commissioner regarding his conversation with Herr von Ribbentrop and Herr von Weizsäcker: former declared that provided Polish press moderated its tone and there were no further incidents, Germany would do its utmost to reduce tension over Danzig.	752
697	SIR W. SEEDS Moscow Tel. No. 114	June 2	Refers to No. 624 and transmits text of what M. Molotov described as Anglo-French proposed agreement modified to meet views of Soviet Government: reports interview of French Ambassador and himself with M. Molotov.	753
698	SIR P. LORAINÉ Rome Tel. No. 184 Saving	June 2	Reports conversation with Count Ciano regarding Anglo-Italian Agreement and general international situation.	754
699	SIR P. LORAINÉ Rome Tel. No. 185 Saving	June 2	Refers to No. 698 and reports that he has given outline of conversation with Count Ciano to U.S. colleague: latter concurs entirely with view that Italy as a whole would view denunciation of Anglo-Italian Agreement with consternation.	756

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
700	MR. RENDEL Sofia Tel. No. 42 Saving	June 2	Reports conversation with President of Council who stated that in his view situation in south-eastern Europe now depended primarily on results of visit of Prince Regent of Yugoslavia to Berlin: if Prince Paul were to commit himself in any way to Germany, situation of other Balkan States would become very serious.	756
701	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw No. 155	June 2	Transmits minute by Military Attaché recording a conversation with French Military Attaché regarding recent Franco-Polish staff conversations and general problem of military and financial assistance to Poland.	757
702	SIR P. LORAINÉ Rome No. 504	June 2	Reports information from French Embassy regarding interview which French Ambassador had with M.F.A. on May 30: Count Ciano complained of policy of encirclement and gave reasons why Italy had to keep so many troops in Albania.	759
703	SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 272	June 3	Refers to Nos. 687 and 684: reports action he proposes to take and asks for guidance on two points: copies of communications to M.F.A. will be sent to French Ambassador for his information.	760
704	SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 273	June 3	Refers to No. 686 and transmits summary of Roumanian Government's reply to Turkish communication of May 26 regarding Anglo-Turkish declaration.	761
705	TO SIR R. CAMPBELL Belgrade Tel. No. 26 Saving	June 3	Records conversation with Yugoslav Chargé d'Affaires who called on May 30 in connexion with Anglo-Turkish Declaration: M. Milanovitch expressed the opinion that only result of Anglo-Turkish Declaration would be to draw down on Balkan Entente and on Yugoslavia in particular wrath of Axis.	762
706	TO SIR P. LORAINÉ Rome	June 3	Letter from Sir O. Sargent referring to No. 593 and stating reasons why it was decided not to make public statement suggested therein: reply to Signor Mussolini's enquiry regarding Anglo-Italian Agreement will be sent shortly.	762
707	MR. SHEPHERD Danzig Tel. No. 52	June 4	Reports that President of Danzig Senate has addressed another Note to Polish Commissioner-General complaining that he has received no reply to his Notes of May 16 and 24 regarding Danzig-Polish frontier incidents and stating that he has instructed all Danzig officials to sever all official and social connexion with three Polish officials concerned: summarizes press comment regarding incidents and Polish customs inspectors.	764
708	TO SIR P. LORAINÉ Rome Tel. No. 259	June 4	Refers to Nos. 651-3 and transmits reply of H.M.G. to Signor Mussolini's enquiry regarding Anglo-Italian Agreement.	765

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
709	SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 276	June 4	Reports agreement of M.F.A. to communication of Notes regarding negotiations to French Ambassador: M.F.A. to keep Soviet Ambassador <i>au courant</i> .	766
710	MR. ORDE Riga Tel. No. 18	June 5	Reports earnest hope of M.F.A. that in statement about Soviet negotiations, which he seemed to think would be made in Parliament on June 5, nothing would be said which would alter position as regards Baltic States.	767
711	MR. ORDE Riga Tel. No. 20	June 5	Refers to No. 710 and reports comments of M.F.A. on M. Molotov's speech of May 31 regarding Anglo-Soviet negotiations (No. 689). M.F.A. stated that formula communicated by H.M.G. seemed entirely satisfactory from Latvian point of view though Latvian Cabinet had not yet considered it.	767
712	SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 188	June 5	Refers to No. 707 and reports views of M.F.A.'s Chef de Cabinet regarding matter: German warship to visit Danzig on June 11.	767
713	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin Tel. No. 232 Saving	June 5	Transmits appreciation of present position in Germany as regards Danzig: suggests two possible lines on which compromise might be reached.	768
714	TO SIR E. PHIPPS Paris No. 1384	June 5	Records conversation with French Ambassador who urged that early progress should be made with draft terms of Anglo-Polish Agreement.	772
715	TO SIR E. PHIPPS Paris No. 1385	June 5	Records conversation with French Ambassador regarding progress of negotiations with Soviet Government: transmits comments of French Government on recent memorandum of Soviet Government (see No. 697) received from M. Corbin: way of speeding up negotiations discussed and Ambassador told that French Government would be informed of decision reached.	772
716	TO SIR W. SEEDS Moscow No. 425	June 5	Records conversation of Sir L. Oliphant with Soviet Ambassador on latter's return from Geneva: M. Maisky was informed of progress of negotiations and stated that he thought latest telegram to Moscow (No. 662) showed material improvement and should be of great help in Moscow.	773
717	SIR P. LORAINÉ Rome	June 5	Letter to Sir O. Sargent acknowledging No. 706 and informing him that in his interview with Signor Mussolini he specifically referred to Prime Minister's speech on May 19 which Signor Mussolini said he had noted: comments on suggestion regarding demobilization in Libya.	774
718	MR. GALLIENNE Tallinn Tel. No. 9 to Riga Tel. No. 9 to F.O.	June 6	Reports that Estonian M.F.A. will sign Non-Aggression Pact in Berlin on June 7. M.F.A. stated that German Minister had told him that U.S.S.R. would evade signing agreement with British Government.	775

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
719	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 221	June 6	Reports comments of U.S. Ambassador on negotiations with Soviet Government: Mr. Bullitt feels strongly that latest Soviet proposals should be closely scrutinized in lurid and sinister light of Soviet Note of March 28 to Estonian Government.	775
720	TO SIR W. SEEDS Moscow Tel. No. 129	June 6	Asks Ambassador to come to London for discussion on reply to be sent to latest Soviet Note.	776
721	TO SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 190	June 6	Message for Mr. Strang requesting him to be ready to return to London at a moment's notice as he may be required to accompany Sir W. Seeds on his return to Moscow.	776
722	TO SIR W. SEEDS Moscow Tel. No. 130	June 6	Instructions to explain to M. Molotov reasons for recall to London.	777
723	SIR M. PALAIRET Athens Tel. No. 249	June 6	Reports information from Director of Political Section of Ministry of Foreign Affairs that, according to information given to Greek Minister in Berlin, there has been strong reaction in Turkey, notably amongst army officers, against Anglo-Turkish Declaration, and that German Government hope to prevent conclusion of definite agreement between United Kingdom and Turkey.	777
724	SIR O. SARGENT Foreign Office	June 6	Minute recording conversation with M. Cambon of French Embassy regarding recall of Sir W. Seeds: suggestion made to him that French Government might like to recall their Ambassador likewise.	778
725	TO SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw No. 365	June 6	Records conversation of Prime Minister with Polish Ambassador regarding Polish Government's request for financial assistance: Prime Minister suggested that Polish mission should be sent to London to discuss matter.	778
726	TO SIR P. LORAINÉ Rome No. 855	June 6	Records conversation with Italian Ambassador, before his departure for Rome, when Anglo-Italian relations discussed. Count Grandi explained reasons for his speech on occasion of celebration of Italo-German alliance.	779
727	SIR N. HENDERSON Berlin	June 6	Letter to Sir A. Cadogan referring to No. 713 and reporting his impression that belief was growing in responsible quarters that Britain intended to make war in any case as soon as she was ready: discusses situation.	781
728	SIR P. LORAINÉ Rome	June 6	Letter to Sir O. Sargent explaining what he said to various colleagues regarding his interview with Signor Mussolini on May 27.	784

LXXXV

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
729	SIR W. SEEDS Moscow Tel. No. 117	June 7	Refers to No. 720 and reports that he is ill and unable to travel for two or three days.	784
730	SIR W. SEEDS Moscow Tel. No. 118	June 7	Reports article in 'Pravda' referring to interest of foreign press in Anglo-Franco-Soviet negotiations and setting forth Soviet proposals for defensive front against further development of aggression in Europe.	785
731	To SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 226	June 7	Refers to No. 703 and replies to points raised.	785
732	To SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 191	June 7	Refers to No. 607 and explains exactly what was intended regarding approach to Scandinavian Governments.	786
733	To SIR H. KENNARD Warsaw Tel. No. 193 To MR. O'MALLEY Budapest Tel. No. 30	June 7	Message for Mr. Strang requesting him to return to London immediately prior to proceeding to Moscow.	786
734	To SIR W. SEEDS Moscow Tel. No. 132	June 7	Refers to No. 730 and states that Mr. Strang is proceeding to Moscow with full instructions and that Sir W. Seeds should not make journey to London.	787
735	To SIR W. SEEDS Moscow Tel. No. 131	June 7	Transmits text of statement made by Prime Minister in House of Commons on June 7 regarding progress of negotiations with U.S.S.R. and decision to send representative of Foreign Office to Moscow to convey to H.M. Ambassador full information as to attitude of H.M.G. on all outstanding points.	787
736	MR. SHEPHERD Danzig Tel. No. 54	June 7	Refers to No. 712 and agrees with opinion expressed in paragraph 1 regarding events in Danzig: confirms that German cruiser 'Königsberg' is to visit Danzig from August 23 to 25.	788
737	SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 279	June 7	Reports reply of M.F.A. to allegation of Greek Minister in Berlin that there was a strong reaction in Turkey, especially among army officers, against Anglo-Turkish Declaration.	789
738	SIR H. KNATCHBULL- HUGESSEN Angora Tel. No. 280	June 7	Reports that general impression of M.F.A. and President of Republic, after seeing German Ambassador, was that German reaction to Anglo-Turkish negotiations was milder than they had expected. M.F.A. derived impression from Herr von Papen that latter was trying to convince him of Germany's pacific intentions and of her readiness to discuss outstanding problems with H.M.G.	789

	NO. AND NAME	DATE	MAIN SUBJECT	PAGE
739	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 343 Saving	June 7	Summarizes statement in semi-official 'Temps' regarding M. Bonnet's interviews with French Ambassador at Berlin and Italian Ambassador: suggests reason for statement.	790
740	SIR E. PHIPPS Paris Tel. No. 344 Saving	June 7	Reports comments of M. Bonnet regarding decision to send Mr. Strang to Moscow: former stated that French Ambassador at Berlin feels that agreement with Soviet is essential, for otherwise M. Coulondre fears possible partition of Poland between Germany and Russia.	790
741	MR. ASHTON-GWATKIN Foreign Office	June 7	Memorandum recording conversation with Dr. Wohltat, Economic adviser to Field-Marshal Göring, and Dr. Weber of German Embassy. Dr. Wohltat's idea for economic settlement between Great Britain and Germany discussed.	791
742	TO SIR R. LINDSAY Washington No. 562	June 7	Records conversation with U.S. Ambassador who agreed that French policy was being unnecessarily stiff upon matter of initiation of any conversations with Italy and also in regard to matters arising between France and Spain: Ambassador stated that he would suggest to President that he might counsel French to try to be more accommodating.	793
743	TO SIR E. PHIPPS Paris No. 1400	June 7	Records conversation with French Ambassador regarding progress being made with draft agreement with Poland and negotiations with Russia: M. Corbin, who was informed of latest developments, made a suggestion regarding inauguration of staff conversations with Soviet Government.	793

APPENDIX I	Additional letters on the European situation April-May, 1939	795
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APPENDIX II	Foreign Office memorandum on the Danzig question with additional comments by Sir N. Henderson	809
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CHAPTER I

M. Beck's visit to London, April 4-6; events leading to the announcement of the British guarantee to Roumania. (April 4-13, 1939.)

No. 1

Visit of the Polish Foreign Minister, April 4-6, 1939

RECORD OF CONVERSATIONS¹

First Meeting

(In the Secretary of State's Room at the Foreign Office, on April 4, at 11 a.m.)

[C 5048/54/18]

Present:

Lord Halifax.

Sir A. Cadogan (Permanent Under-Secretary of State).

Mr. Strang (Foreign Office).

M. Beck (Polish Minister for Foreign Affairs).

Count Raczynski (Polish Ambassador).

Count Joseph Potocki (Ministry for Foreign Affairs).

British Proposal to Poland and Roumania.

M. Beck said that as he had, in his last conversation with Sir H. Kennard,² reserved his final answer to the British proposal, he thought the best thing would be for him to open the conversation by giving his reply.

He said he would start by saying that the question (which had been put to him by Sir H. Kennard) whether Poland would defend her political and economic independence was a purely rhetorical question, otherwise he would not be in London.

He was of opinion that the need for the present conversation had been created by the attitude of Germany, which had recently lost all measure. The Polish Government were still prepared, as they had hitherto been, to try to find a peaceful settlement, but they could not close their eyes to dangers which had become obvious.

The proposal made by the British Government was an important one and was welcome to the Polish Government, not only for its substance, but by reason of the terms in which it was couched.

¹ This record and those in Nos. 2, 10, and 16 were made by the British representatives, for the use of His Majesty's Government.

² See Volume IV of this Series, No. 605.

The first thing he wished to say was that when His Majesty's Government said that they were prepared to enter into an engagement towards Poland, it was clear that the engagement must be reciprocal, and this was the light in which the Polish Government saw the question.

As regards Eastern Europe, however, the situation was not quite so clear. In this sphere, three questions arose, two of which had already been touched on in the British proposal, and one of which had not been touched on. These were the questions of: (1) Soviet Russia; (2) the Danubian Basin; (3) the Baltic countries.

He would start with Soviet Russia, and repeated what he had said to Sir H. Kennard, namely, that in view of the grave tension between Moscow and Berlin, it would be dangerous to bring Russia into any discussions. He recalled what Marshal Pilsudski had said, namely, that when thinking of Germany and Russia it was necessary to take into account not only their interests, but their ideologies. For this reason the question of Soviet Russia required to be handled with great caution and by special methods.

There were two things which it was impossible for Poland to do, namely, to make her policy dependent upon either Berlin or upon Moscow. He was glad to note that due account had been taken of this in the British proposal.

As regards the Danubian Basin, there were two countries with whom Poland had special relations, namely Roumania, her ally, and Hungary, her friend.

The Polish-Roumanian alliance³ applied only in the case of an attack from the East. The Polish Government had made great efforts to prevent a conflict arising between Roumania and Hungary. They thought that if they gave any general backing to Roumania, this would tend to throw Hungary into the arms of Germany, and they felt, therefore, that any action of this kind would be premature. As Roumania was the ally of Poland, any extension of Polish obligations towards Roumania would need to be discussed between Warsaw and Bucharest, since only in that way could the interests of the two countries be fully reviewed.

M. Beck said that in the foregoing remarks he had tried to give an exact picture of the Polish Government's attitude. He would now add some considerations of a more general character.

From the contacts which they had recently had with Count Ciano and with the Hungarian Foreign Minister, the Polish Government had gained the impression that both Italy and Hungary were seriously perturbed about Germany's designs of domination. Though the signs of this anxiety were not obvious on the surface, the Polish Government thought this anxiety was deep-seated. This was a delicate matter, but the Polish Government thought that it was a factor which ought not to be overlooked. In any event, M. Beck thought that no door should be closed and no political action taken which would tend to bar the door. He asked that this information should be regarded as most confidential.

³ The Polish-Roumanian Treaty of 1931 is printed in *British and Foreign State Papers*, Vol. 134, p. 1050.

Lord Halifax asked whether he was right in thinking that, in M. Beck's view, it would be wise to examine the Roumanian position very carefully for fear of throwing Hungary into the arms of Germany. And to take the point a stage further, did he think that if Hungary moved into the German camp, this would diminish the possibility of a joint Italo-Hungarian effort against Germany?

M. Beck agreed.

He then turned to the question of the Baltic countries. The Polish Government had observed that resistance to German pressure in those countries had been stouter than it had been in Czecho-Slovakia. Poland took a great interest in those countries, particularly in Lithuania. M. Beck thought it would be wise to help those countries, and in a discreet way to encourage their spirit of resistance. He realised cautious methods would have to be employed so as not to irritate German elements bordering on the Baltic States. Poland had recently tried to help Lithuania, though without making it known that she had done so.

Lord Halifax said he was grateful for this information.

Perhaps M. Beck would allow him to clear up a number of points that had occurred to him during M. Beck's earlier exposition of the Polish attitude.

He wished first, on behalf of His Majesty's Government, to express appreciation of M. Beck's remarks about the British proposal. He wished to ask, as a matter of interest rather than of policy, whether the Polish Government thought there was any substance, and if so, what substance, in the rumours and anticipations of the preceding week.

M. Beck replied that the Polish Government had not noticed any signs of dangerous military action on the part of Germany, but they had increased their own preparations in order to prevent their being made the object of threats from Germany. They had, of course, their own local Danzig affair, but this was not yet in negotiable shape. Poland, in any event, would not be prepared to discuss it under threat or to accept any imposed solution.

Lord Halifax said that M. Beck and he could discuss the Danzig question a little later, but he understood M. Beck to say that he did not think that it was ripe for negotiation.

M. Beck said that, in view of the fact that the Council of the League had it in mind to withdraw from some of its responsibilities in Danzig, the question was one which ought to be discussed with Germany, and such discussion might perhaps be feasible, but Poland would not accept a *fait accompli*, though she would not close the door to reasonable and free negotiations.

Lord Halifax, reverting to the discussion of the British proposal, said that he understood M. Beck to say that, when Great Britain was prepared to undertake a commitment towards Poland, he felt that this should be on a reciprocal basis, and that therefore Poland was prepared to give a reciprocal undertaking to Great Britain.

M. Beck agreed that this was so. This was the only basis that any self-respecting country could accept.

Lord Halifax said that he had expected this to be M. Beck's attitude, first, because of the position Poland occupied in the world, and, secondly, because in this respect the interests of Poland and Great Britain were identical, both their immediate interests and their interest in the maintenance of European peace.

Before leaving this question, he would like to be clear on one point. Poland's treaty with France, he understood, obliged Poland to go to the assistance of France if France was the object of an attack by Germany.

M. Beck said that this was so, and added that the Polish interpretation of the Franco-Polish Treaty had always been more explicit as regards the question of immediate assistance than had the interpretation given to the treaty by the French from time to time. Poland had always considered the Franco-Polish Treaty of 1921⁴ as the fundamental instrument. Subsequent treaties had merely shaped it to the needs of the time. He recalled that in 1936, during the meeting of the Council of the League in London, after the German occupation of the Rhineland, he had made clear in what sense Poland interpreted her obligations to France.

Lord Halifax said that Great Britain, like Poland, was now contemplating a different situation. What Great Britain and Poland were anxious to do was to make a joint effort against domination in whatever direction it might be. It was for this reason that, in our proposal, we had asked a further question. If France and Great Britain were directly attacked by Germany, or if they became involved in war with Germany arising out of a German attack upon Holland, Belgium, Switzerland, Denmark or even Yugoslavia, could they count on Polish support?

M. Beck replied that at the present moment, from the purely legal point of view, Poland was bound to assist France only in the event of an attack by Germany upon France. The other points, going beyond Poland's present legal obligations, might be discussed with His Majesty's Government, if the latter were willing, with the exception perhaps of the case of Yugoslavia, which belonged to quite a different region. Yugoslavia fell into the same area as Italy and Hungary.

Lord Halifax said that M. Beck would appreciate that it was vital for us to know whether, if we were attacked by Germany, Poland would be with us.

M. Beck replied that this would clearly be so.

Lord Halifax said that it was equally vital for us to know whether we should enjoy the same measure of support from Poland if Germany attacked Holland or Belgium or Switzerland or Denmark.

⁴ This Agreement is printed in *British and Foreign State Papers*, Vol. 118, p. 342.

M. Beck said that the Polish Government would not refuse to discuss this question.

Lord Halifax said he would try to make his reasons clear in a few words. His Majesty's Government felt that if Germany took aggressive action against any of these countries, this could only be a preliminary to aggression against France or Great Britain.

M. Beck said that he quite understood this. The Polish Government would be ready to discuss this question, provided there was general agreement on other parts of the British proposal.

Lord Halifax inferred that M. Beck would therefore not disagree with him in feeling that, if a German attack was delivered in this way on Western Europe (he would leave out Yugoslavia for the present), France and Great Britain would have to resist it and that the interest of Poland would also be closely engaged, because if, as a result of the struggle the strength of France and Great Britain were diminished, the danger to Poland would be correspondingly increased. He fully realised the importance of the question he was asking. Neither the Polish Government nor His Majesty's Government would underestimate the importance of their standing closely together in face of a common danger.

M. Beck replied that he was, of course, at one with Lord Halifax on the general principle. But there was a difference between a general principle and the particular cases arising under it. If the question of these Western European countries was to be discussed, he would have to ask what undertakings we had assumed towards each of them. Further, if Poland was to take an interest in matters which concerned these countries, it would be interesting to know how those countries themselves would react.

Lord Halifax said that he would try to answer this question.

As regards Belgium, our obligations were defined by treaty.⁵ Great Britain and France were bound to help Belgium if the latter were attacked by Germany. There was no doubt that Belgium would defend herself.

M. Beck here interjected that it seemed to him essential that only those countries should receive assistance who were prepared to defend themselves.

Lord Halifax thought that Holland would also defend herself if attacked. Great Britain and France had agreed together that they would be prepared to support Holland if attacked by Germany,⁶ but neither Great Britain nor France had any treaty obligations towards Holland, and the Netherlands Government had not been informed of the agreement which His Majesty's Government and the French Government had reached as regards the defence of the Netherlands.

As regards Switzerland, His Majesty's Government had told the French

⁵ i.e. the Treaty of Locarno, printed in *British and Foreign State Papers*, Vol. 121, p. 923. See also Cmd. 5437 of 1937.

⁶ See Volume IV of this Series, No. 77.

Government that they would support the latter in resisting a German attack on Switzerland.⁷ Both Great Britain and France were bound by the Treaty of Vienna of 1815, though it was not clear what this obligation amounted to. Switzerland would certainly defend herself if attacked. Nothing had been said to the Swiss Government about the agreement reached between Great Britain and France for the defence of Switzerland.

As regards Denmark, there had been no precise exchange of views between His Majesty's Government and the French Government, and nothing had been said to the Danish Government. The conclusion was not so precise as in the other cases, but he would anticipate that, if Denmark were threatened, His Majesty's Government would attribute to it the same character as a similar threat in other places.

The reason why His Majesty's Government had reached these conclusions was that they recognised that any act of aggression, if now made, would be the same in character whether it occurred in Eastern Europe or in Western Europe. It was therefore in the common interest of all to resist it together, and not to allow our forces to be divided. Lord Halifax therefore hoped that M. Beck would reflect upon these Western cases. If he was not yet prepared to give an answer, perhaps they could return to the subject later on.

M. Beck assured Lord Halifax that he fully understood the reasons which had prompted His Majesty's Government. Poland herself had given very few undertakings of this kind, and it would be a very grave matter for her to undertake new ones; but he fully understood the point of view of His Majesty's Government.

Lord Halifax said that he would now turn to Soviet Russia.

He was glad to hear M. Beck say that His Majesty's Government had appreciated the position of Poland *vis-à-vis* Soviet Russia. Would he be right in thinking that the Polish Government would not be sorry if His Majesty's Government could manage to keep on fair terms with Soviet Russia?

M. Beck said that Poland attached great importance to preserving correct relations with Soviet Russia. The Polish Government had signed a pact of non-aggression with her.⁸ After a period of tension last autumn, the necessary steps had been taken to bring about a *détente*. The two countries had even signed a satisfactory commercial treaty. For that reason, the Polish Government could understand that His Majesty's Government should also attach importance to having good relations with Soviet Russia.

He wished, however, to say that any pact of mutual assistance between Poland and Soviet Russia would bring an immediate hostile reaction from Berlin and would probably accelerate the outbreak of a conflict. Poland had succeeded in 1934 in putting Polish-German relations on a normal and satisfactory basis,⁹ and this in spite of the existence of the Polish-French Treaty,

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of which they had never made any secret. But the Polish Government realised that, if they similarly engaged themselves towards their eastern neighbour, matters would be brought to a breaking-point.

Lord Halifax asked whether M. Beck thought that a mutual assistance arrangement between Poland and Great Britain would have a provocative effect on Germany.

M. Beck said he could not give a definite answer. Such an agreement would be a very important matter for Germany, though not so important as a Polish-Russian agreement. He thought the Polish-French Treaty was a good analogy and he recalled that Hitler himself had said that he had nothing to say against that Treaty, as he had no intention of attacking either Poland or France and had no objection to their making a treaty with each other. The same might apply to a Polish treaty with Great Britain.

Lord Halifax said that, making full allowance for these considerations, which he fully understood, it might well be that Poland, Great Britain and France might all be in trouble together and, if so, it might be important to Poland to be able to use the Russian route for the supply of war material. Was the appropriate course not, therefore, to look upon the problem facing Poland and Great Britain and France as the problem of how to get a maximum degree of collaboration from Soviet Russia without entailing dangerous consequences?

M. Beck appreciated this argument, but insisted that the aim of the efforts which were now being made should be the maintenance of peace, and that every care should be taken not to do anything to make the danger of war more imminent. Poland, for her part, was ready to improve her relations with Soviet Russia, but not to extend them. It was important not to provoke a conflict, though it was, of course, difficult to say whether, indeed, a conflict was unavoidable.

Lord Halifax asked how far it would be an embarrassment to the Polish Government, and open to objection from their point of view, if relations between France and Soviet Russia, or even between Great Britain and Soviet Russia, were made closer.

M. Beck recalled that during the negotiations between France and the Soviet Union which led up to the Franco-Soviet Pact,¹⁰ the Polish Government made an arrangement with M. Laval by which the latter accepted a Polish declaration to the effect that no undertaking entered into by France towards the Soviet Union could extend Polish liabilities. If France and Great Britain now undertook obligations towards the Soviet Union, Poland would find it necessary to make some similar declaration.

He thought that France had made a bad bargain under the Franco-Soviet Pact, which brought few concrete results and made a *détente* with Berlin and Rome more difficult.

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Lord Halifax asked what value M. Beck placed upon the Soviet military forces and upon the Soviet transport system as a means of transit.

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M. Beck said that this was also the view of the Polish General Staff.

Lord Halifax explained that one of the difficulties about Soviet Russia in this country was that some members of the Labour party believed that, if Great Britain and the Soviet Union could join hands, the world would be safe for ever more.

M. Beck said he doubted the validity of this theory. There was no common frontier between Germany and Soviet Russia.

Discussion then turned on Roumania.

M. Beck said that he wished to consult the Roumanian Foreign Minister before coming to any final conclusion as regards the Roumanian aspect of our proposal.

Lord Halifax fully appreciated what M. Beck had said about Roumania and Hungary and about the danger of throwing Hungary into Germany's arms. On the other hand, he thought that there was great danger in having no concerted plan as to what to do if Roumania were the object of an attack, either directly, or indirectly through Hungary.

M. Beck thought that it was desirable to give Roumania some backing. Poland had done so from the military point of view. Great Britain could do so from the economic and other points of view. This would be a different thing from a rigid political system like the Little Entente which would automatically throw Hungary into the other camp. Poland was anxious for good relations between Roumania and Hungary, and had even threatened Hungary a short time ago that there would be trouble if Hungary did anything to endanger Roumania. At the same time the Polish Government were loath to waste what little political capital they possessed in Budapest.

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M. Beck entirely agreed.

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M. Beck replied that he would like to think this point over. He was awaiting further information from Bucharest as to the Roumanian attitude.

(The Meeting adjourned at 12.45 p.m.)

No. 2

Visit of the Polish Foreign Minister, April 4-6, 1939

RECORD OF CONVERSATIONS

Second Meeting

[C 5049/54/18]

(In the Prime Minister's Room at the House of Commons, on April 4, at 5 p.m.)

Present: as at first meeting, with the addition of Mr. Chamberlain.

British Proposal to Poland and Roumania—(continued).

M. Beck said that he would like to state in one sentence how he understood the conversation which had been held in the morning. It was of interest to the two Governments not to provoke a conflict in Europe, but to stand up against new political methods which sought to impose unilaterally the will of one nation upon others in Europe.

The Prime Minister asked whether M. Beck felt, as His Majesty's Government did, that German action in Czecho-Slovakia was in flagrant contrast with Germany's assurances as to the limits of her action, and that it did seem to point to a desire on the part of the German Government to extend this process to other States.

M. Beck agreed. Up till 1938 German policy, although it had placed other countries in a difficult position, could be defended. Recent events were indefensible. That was why the Polish Government welcomed the Prime

Government that they would support the latter in resisting a German attack on Switzerland.⁷ Both Great Britain and France were bound by the Treaty of Vienna of 1815, though it was not clear what this obligation amounted to. Switzerland would certainly defend herself if attacked. Nothing had been said to the Swiss Government about the agreement reached between Great Britain and France for the defence of Switzerland.

As regards Denmark, there had been no precise exchange of views between His Majesty's Government and the French Government, and nothing had been said to the Danish Government. The conclusion was not so precise as in the other cases, but he would anticipate that, if Denmark were threatened, His Majesty's Government would attribute to it the same character as a similar threat in other places.

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M. Beck agreed. Up till 1938 German policy, although it had placed other countries in a difficult position, could be defended. Recent events were indefensible. That was why the Polish Government welcomed the Prime

Minister's statement (which M. Beck asked him to confirm) that His Majesty's Government's object was to establish a system which would make that process impossible.

The Prime Minister said that was precisely his view.

M. Beck said that the Polish Government were decided to stand up against the extension of that process to Poland. This was, however, not merely a matter of concern to the Polish Government, but a general position which it was useful for the two Governments to discuss.

The Prime Minister observed that Poland was closer to Germany than Great Britain was, and M. Beck was possibly in a better position to know what was going on in Germany. Had he come to any conclusion where the next action by Germany was to be expected if Germany followed up her recent course of action further?

M. Beck replied that if he were to go by what the Germans themselves said, he would say that the gravest question was the colonial question. His own personal view—and he was not in a position to say that it was the view of his Government—was that after recent events the German Government had been impressed by the reaction they had produced in the world. There was temporarily a kind of lull, and this was one more reason to increase that reaction and make it firmer. Poland was a classical case. Since 1934 she had made an effort to place her relations with Germany on a friendly basis; to-day it was her firm action and her military preparations which constituted the most serious deterrent to Germany.

The Prime Minister then asked M. Beck to continue his remarks about the conversation that had taken place that morning.

M. Beck said that as regards the practical position he had expressed his views on that occasion, but he would be glad to hear the Prime Minister's reaction.

The Prime Minister said that he had not been present, but he understood that the discussion had covered a wide field, but had not brought any definite conclusions.

M. Beck said he wished to put one question of principle. Did the Prime Minister consider that His Majesty's Government were prepared to place the new relationship between Great Britain and Poland on a permanent basis in view of Poland's willingness to undertake reciprocal obligations?

The Prime Minister said that if the German Government had in mind such a policy as he had described above—the policy of proceeding step by step and attacking one country at a time—this must end in the destruction of Polish independence, and would constitute the most serious attack on the British Empire that we had ever experienced. It might, indeed, be completely successful. That being so, the interests of Poland and Great Britain were the same. Neither wanted war, or to impose unreasonable restrictions on Ger-

many; but they could not allow such a policy to succeed without taking active steps to resist it. It seemed to His Majesty's Government that the most effective way to prevent that policy being put into operation would be to make it clear that if Germany pursued that policy, she would be involved in a war on two fronts.

M. Beck said that the question he had put was also an offer and a proposal. Poland was willing to take into consideration the possibility of placing the new relationship between the two countries on a permanent basis.

The Prime Minister said that he had been putting before M. Beck a number of considerations leading up to the action which His Majesty's Government considered it desirable to take. The declaration which he had made on the 31st March¹ had been made to prevent their being taken by surprise by some sudden *coup* or swoop. It was the intention of His Majesty's Government to try to arrive at an agreement with the Polish Government on the understanding that that declaration of our intention was one side of an agreement and that the Polish Government would be willing to offer a reciprocal undertaking from their side.

M. Beck said he thought that he had already made it clear that this was the intention of the Polish Government.

The Prime Minister agreed.

M. Beck said the Polish Government had never contemplated the possibility of a mere one-sided agreement.

The Prime Minister went on to say that the scheme he had outlined was only a skeleton one, and there were a number of details which would have to be filled in. One point he wished to consider was the following: he understood M. Beck's difficulty about bringing the Soviet Union into the discussion as being likely to precipitate a conflict. He agreed that they must be cautious. On the other hand, while he hoped that any agreement that might be made would help to preserve peace, nevertheless they were dealing with an individual who was, to put it mildly, subject to strong emotions, and they must be prepared to face the fact that he might precipitate a conflict on the mere ground of Great Britain and Poland having concluded an agreement. It was necessary to be prepared for this eventuality.

Supposing that Great Britain and France and Poland were at war with Germany, he asked himself how Poland would carry on the conflict. She had a fine army and certain air resources, but he understood her artillery was not very strong, nor were her fortifications comparable with those which existed on the Western front. Poland's forces would no doubt put up a gallant fight, but if her munitions were exhausted, where could they replenish them except from Soviet Russia, assuming that supply from Soviet Russia would be possible?

¹ See Volume IV of this Series, No. 582, and Parl. Deb., 5th ser., H. of C., vol. 345, col. 2415.

M. Beck explained that Poland was in a position that required her to conciliate two opposing ideas; in the first place, she had to be well prepared to ward off any possible attack; in the second place, she had to act in such a way as to make an attack less likely. The more difficult the situation was, the more simple was the system that imposed itself upon her. On the one hand, she would, if attacked, defend herself, even if half the country were occupied. On the other hand, she would make the strongest efforts to avoid bringing upon her people the catastrophe which they suffered during the world war. He was happy to conduct discussions with His Majesty's Government, but he was loath to bring in any political elements that would threaten to bring a conflict nearer. Although it was impossible to foresee when a conflict might break out, that was no reason why the Polish Government should deprive themselves of all the arguments at their disposal in order to ward off a conflict as long as possible.

In the case of Germany and Russia, the imponderables counted for more than with other countries. It was therefore necessary to be especially careful in handling them. From conversations which he had had in Germany, he had acquired the conviction that a decision to open a war against Poland would be a very difficult one for Germany to take. Any association between Poland and Russia would bring that decision nearer.

The Prime Minister quite appreciated this argument and was not pressing M. Beck to bring in Russia openly. But it was necessary to face up to the practical question. If, in spite of all efforts, war did break out, what then? He was quite sure that M. Beck had thought about this and had ideas on the subject.

M. Beck said that, as regards any conversations that His Majesty's Government might wish to have with the Soviet Government, Poland would keep clear and not join in, leaving the matter to the judgment of His Majesty's Government, though continuing to be sceptical about it.

The Prime Minister observed that, if Germany and Poland were already at war, the danger of bringing Russia into the discussions no longer existed, since war would already have broken out. If, in that case, His Majesty's Government had succeeded in arranging for assistance in war material from Russia, would that assistance be welcome to Poland?

M. Beck said that, as a preliminary observation, he would recall a remark of Marshal Pilsudski to the effect that, even if we have to fight some day, that is no reason for our sleeping with our rifles in our beds. For the present, he had no authority to express any opinion about possible relations between Great Britain and Soviet Russia, but he was not in a position to accept any agreement which would have the effect, if even only indirectly, of linking Poland with Soviet Russia.

The Prime Minister pointed out that he was not suggesting that there should be in any public document any clause providing that Russia should

do this or that in certain given circumstances. He was thinking of the situation in which His Majesty's Government might enquire of the Soviet Union what their intentions were, and the reply would be that they did not know whether Poland would accept assistance. He quite understood M. Beck's objection that any association, direct or indirect, with Soviet Russia would be a danger. But the question he wished to ask was, was there any other reason against accepting help from Soviet Russia if war actually takes place?

M. Beck said that his attitude might be expressed by saying that, so far as Poland was concerned, two things were essential, that she should not be dependent on Germany and that she should not be dependent on Soviet Russia. If Poland subordinated herself to either, she would no longer be an element of peace, but an element likely to provoke war. He quite realised the practical difficulties of this attitude on Poland's part, but the principle was vital, and he had expressed it openly both in Berlin and Moscow.

The Prime Minister said he would not press M. Beck any further on this point, but it was necessary to contemplate the possibility that it might result in war. In that event, His Majesty's Government would wish to see Poland resist as strongly and as long as possible. His Majesty's Government were constantly being attacked in the House of Commons because they did not get on to better terms with Russia. He wished to ask M. Beck a question. Would it be embarrassing to Poland if His Majesty's Government now tried to improve their relations with the Soviet Government? This would not mean that they would make an agreement with the Soviet Government, but that they would try to establish such relations as would enable them to expect help from Soviet Russia in case of war.

M. Beck replied that this was a matter which was quite outside Poland's competence, and he had no opinion to express and no objection to raise. But he would utter the warning that, if Russia were brought in, this might well precipitate a conflict. He wished to add that, as regards Poland's relations with Russia, he had taken care to see that they were correct both in the political and in the economic sphere.

The Prime Minister said he would pass to a point discussed to a limited extent that morning. If there was a direct attack upon Great Britain by Germany, the meaning of Poland's reciprocal undertaking was clear. But there was, of course, an alternative series of circumstances in which there would be no direct attack on Great Britain. In recent months there had been numerous stories that Germany had plans for opening an attack on Great Britain and France through some neutral country, either Belgium or Holland or Switzerland. If Great Britain became involved in war with Germany in this way, would this be covered by the reciprocal undertaking which M. Beck had in mind?

M. Beck said that he could only repeat what he said to Lord Halifax in the morning. If Great Britain and Poland reached a permanent binding

agreement, the Polish Government would not exclude friendly discussion on these points. If the principle of permanent collaboration was accepted, Poland would be willing to discuss them.

The Prime Minister said that principle was accepted by His Majesty's Government.

M. Beck observed that, as there was no difference of opinion as to the danger of the situation, and as the principle in question had been accepted, the Polish Government were willing to take these questions into serious consideration.

The Prime Minister said that this was satisfactory. The course he had in mind was, he thought, the only way to deal with the situation. A great central Power could strike anywhere in any direction, and, unless the other Powers had a mutual arrangement which would cover any course, they would always be at a disadvantage.

M. Beck said he would beg the Prime Minister not to interpret the caution of his language as evidence of a lack of goodwill on his part. The matters they were discussing were of the gravest importance, and the vital interests of Poland were at stake. He therefore had to speak in grave and measured terms. He wished to avoid all unmeasured language so that he could be sure of being able to fulfil all that he had promised.

The Prime Minister agreed that the gravest matters were at stake, namely, the future of the two countries. It was essential that they should not find themselves left with the worst of both worlds, namely, to find that they had provoked Germany without at the same time providing themselves with effective defence.

M. Beck said that this was his own chief concern.

The Prime Minister then reverted to the question of Eastern Europe. The two countries he had in mind were Roumania and Yugoslavia. Roumania seemed to His Majesty's Government a vital spot, because of her immense resources. Until recently, he had thought that this would be the scene of Germany's next thrust, although it was true that Germany had no frontier with Roumania. If Germany obtained control of Roumania's resources in oil and wheat, &c., whether this was achieved directly or indirectly, this would mean a great accession of strength to Germany, and a weakening of the other side.

M. Beck admitted the importance of Roumania. Roumania was the ally of Poland, and the Polish Government attached importance to everything that concerned Roumania. As he had said to Lord Halifax, this part of Europe still, in his view, held positive possibilities, and it was desirable not to close the door to favourable developments by adopting too rigid a system.

The Prime Minister asked whether this meant that M. Beck wished to leave Roumania out of any arrangement for the present.

M. Beck said there were two points: The first was that Roumania was an ally of Poland. He did not, therefore, like to come to any definite decision without concerting with the Roumanian Government. In the second place, he wished to find some less rigid system which would cover this part of the world without compromising future possibilities.

The Prime Minister asked whether this meant that he wished to reserve the whole question for consideration with the Roumanian Foreign Minister.

M. Beck replied that as an ally it was Poland's duty to consult Roumania. As the situation developed, however, he would be ready to discuss with His Majesty's Government how best to handle the Roumanian situation.

The Prime Minister asked whether M. Beck had in mind the conclusion of a treaty, or alliance, or pact, between Poland, Great Britain and France, and that any arrangement relating to Roumania (on which M. Beck did not wish to express an opinion until he had consulted the Roumanian Government) should be supplementary to or separate from the main agreement.

M. Beck replied that with France Poland already had a treaty. So far as Great Britain was concerned, they were at present trying to establish principles. As regards Roumania, it would be best for the moment to leave her out until the Danubian problem had cleared itself a little.

Lord Halifax recognised the force of M. Beck's argument. We had, however, learnt to expect things to happen quickly. Supposing Germany, feeling for a weak place in the European structure, should encourage Hungary to pick a quarrel with Roumania and support her. What, according to M. Beck's idea, would be the action we should take?

M. Beck replied that the Polish Government did not wish to lose their influence in Budapest, which was based on centuries of traditional friendship. As a recent example of what might happen, he recalled that Poland had not merely advised but warned Hungary against picking a quarrel with Roumania. If Hungary were to become a vassal State of Germany, the situation would be different. So long as that was not the situation, Poland was unwilling to throw away any chance of influencing the Hungarian Government.

The Prime Minister said there was another possibility which must be considered. Supposing the German Government said to the Roumanian Government: We have made a commercial agreement with you which you have not kept, and we now require you to make a new agreement, by which we shall have the right to receive all your oil and wheat. We give you so many hours to say 'Yes' or 'No,' and if you say 'No,' you must take the consequences. Even though Germany might not have occupied Hungary, she had occupied Bohemia and Moravia and had a protectorate over Slovakia. In these days troops could be transported by aeroplanes, and aircraft could pass over unoccupied territory and drop bombs. Supposing the German threat was that Bucharest would be laid in ruins unless the Roumanian Government accepted.

This might sound fantastic, but we had become accustomed to this kind of thing, and it might very well happen. What was to be done in such an event?

M. Beck said the possibility was a theoretical one; but, supposing it did happen, the answer was that it was for the Roumanians to decide. If the Roumanians had sufficient courage, they would say 'No'. In his opinion, assistance should in that event be afforded to Roumania. Poland was at present helping Roumania in a military way. Great Britain was in a position to help her economically. Poland was organising the Roumanian arms industry and had sent Staff officers to help her with her military organisation.

The Prime Minister said that he was not sure whether Poland was ready to give Roumania a specific assurance of assistance if she said 'No' to Germany. In the absence of such an assurance, would not Roumania be likely to say 'Yes', since any assistance that might be afforded would not arrive in time?

M. Beck repeated that this was a question which Roumania alone could answer, and without consulting the Roumanian Government he himself was unable to give an answer. What Poland had to bear in mind was that, in case of a conflict between Poland and Germany, the help that Poland could expect from Roumania would be rather negligible. M. Beck could not accept it as a fact that Hungary was likely to march against Poland, since this would be too drastic a psychological breach with the past.

The Prime Minister observed that, while it might be true that Roumania could not give much help to Poland, the fact remained that, if Roumania were occupied by Germany, Poland would have a longer frontier with Germany.

M. Beck pointed out that the additional frontier would be quite short, and would be in mountainous territory, which could be held with quite a small force. As regards oil supplies, Poland had sufficient for her needs in case of war.

He did not wish it to be supposed that he was lacking in warmth in speaking of Poland's ally, but his main point was that all this was a question which should be dealt with at Bucharest.

M. Beck then reverted to the question of the Baltic States. It was desirable to do everything possible to strengthen their resistance, while at the same time avoiding all provocation. During the Memel crisis² the Polish Government had informed the Lithuanian Government that they could count entirely on Polish sympathy, and the Lithuanian Government had been grateful for this declaration.

The Prime Minister observed that this had not saved Memel.

M. Beck replied that the Lithuanians had surrendered Memel, and had not asked Poland for assistance. The Polish assurance to Lithuania had been

² See Volume IV of this Series, Chapter V.

given at a later stage, when there was a danger of further German pressure on Lithuania.

Danzig

The Prime Minister asked whether any discussions were at present going on between the Polish and the German Governments about Danzig.

M. Beck replied that no negotiations were in progress, but that conversations about Danzig had been going on for some time—in fact, ever since the Polish Government had heard from Geneva that the Council of the League desired to withdraw the High Commissioner. The object of the conversations was to institute a system in which Danzig would not be a burden upon German-Polish relations, it being essential, of course, that the status of the Free City should be maintained. For the last eight centuries, Danzig—though it had a predominantly German population—had lived upon the Polish hinterland.

He did not know whether it would be possible to reach agreement with Germany, but he was trying to reach an agreement. In any event Poland would certainly take up the challenge if Germany tried to face her with a *fait accompli*.

Lord Halifax enquired what kind of settlement of the Danzig question the Polish Government had in mind.

M. Beck replied that he had in mind a bi-lateral Polish-German arrangement which, while guaranteeing free government for the local population, would safeguard the existing rights of Poland in Danzig. The German Government had never contested Polish rights in Danzig, and had recently confirmed them.

The Prime Minister enquired whether the arrangement would include an 'autobahn' across the Corridor.

M. Beck replied that Poland would never tolerate any extra-territorial system in connexion with such an 'autobahn'; but, on the other hand, she was quite prepared to facilitate transit by making arrangements about visas, customs duties, &c.

The Prime Minister asked whether Germany had ever asked for an 'autobahn'.

M. Beck replied that nothing that had happened had passed beyond the stage of conversations. No written demands had been presented to the Polish Government. No doubt there were people in Germany who wanted to demand these things of Poland, but he doubted whether Germany would risk a conflict with Poland over local matters of this kind. He added, privately and confidentially, that it was possible that Herr von Ribbentrop was the inventor of some of these ideas, but he doubted whether they had received the approval of his chief.

Lord Halifax observed that His Majesty's Government would of course be glad if it were possible for Poland and Germany to reach an agreement about Danzig. As M. Beck knew, the present position was a difficult one both from the point of view of the League of Nations and from the point of view of His Majesty's Government as *Rapporteur*. Some action would have to be taken before the Council met in May. It would help His Majesty's Government if M. Beck could say how he thought the Danzig question could best be handled from the point of view of Polish-German relations.

M. Beck said he desired to come to some arrangement with Germany. He was unable to say whether it would be possible to do anything before the Council met in May. He would, however, keep Lord Halifax informed of the position of the developments. If possible, he would make some practical suggestion before the Council met; if this was not possible, he would offer no advice and leave it to His Majesty's Government to do what they thought best.

Lord Halifax asked whether M. Beck wished to see the High Commissioner retained at Danzig.

M. Beck replied that in view of the complications of the situation, it would make it more difficult for Poland if a decision were taken by the Council which made urgent readjustment necessary. If no agreement were reached between Germany and Poland before May, it would be convenient if no change were made at the May Council. But if an agreement should be reached before May, the situation would, of course, be different.

Lord Halifax observed that a great many people thought that it was desirable that the Council should be released from its guarantee of a Constitution which no longer functioned. He would consult M. Beck before the Council met, but it would not be easy to leave things as they were.

M. Beck said that he realised that the Polish Government would be grateful for anything which the League could do to help, though they did not think that it could help very much. The question was, however, not in itself a very grave one. He did not propose to trouble His Majesty's Government with the various phases through which the Danzig question might pass. If, however, Poland took a firm attitude about Danzig, especially in resistance to a *fait accompli*, this would be not for the sake of Danzig itself, but as a matter of principle. The Polish Government had informed the German Government that they were prepared to discuss the Danzig question in a friendly way; but that they were equally prepared to oppose with all their forces any attempt to settle the Danzig question unilaterally. Danzig had become a kind of symbol.

Future Procedure

The Prime Minister said they had now touched on the main features of the situation. He was much obliged to M. Beck for putting his views so frankly. He understood them better than he did before.

There were a number of matters requiring further consultation, such as the question of Roumania, on which it would not be possible to reach agreement before M. Beck left London. Yet it might be a good thing to try to get something on paper, such, for example, as the heads of an agreement.

M. Beck said that this would be a natural outcome of the conversations. The proposed document might note the questions on which agreement had been reached in principle. This paper would remain confidential. There would also be a public communiqué which would say, among other things, that the principle of reciprocity had been accepted.

The Prime Minister agreed that there might be two papers (1) a confidential document showing the heads of an agreement, and (2) an official communiqué to the press. The first paper might show (a) the points upon which agreement had been reached, (b) the points which required further consideration.

M. Beck said that he would like to have the chance of looking at any draft that was prepared.

The Prime Minister said that there was one further point which he wished to raise.

It might take some time before the official Agreement could be reached and put on paper. If during the interim period nothing but our own one-sided guarantee to Poland remained in force, His Majesty's Government were certain to be criticised. Could M. Beck give an undertaking that Poland's reciprocal guarantee would also be in force?

M. Beck said that he could give this assurance. He had authority from the Head of the State to give this assurance. He asked whether this assurance would remain confidential or would be made public.

He suggested that the Prime Minister might state, if questioned in Parliament, that His Majesty's Government had been assured that whatever undertakings it gave to Poland would be reciprocally given by Poland.

The Prime Minister observed that, stated in this way, the assurance would refer not to the present interim period, but to the permanent Agreement which would be reached at some future date. His Majesty's Government were certain to be asked whether at the present time His Majesty's Government's undertaking alone was in force, or whether Poland had given an undertaking to cover the interim period. It was desirable that he should be able to say that M. Beck's assurance covered the transitory period.

M. Beck said that the Prime Minister could certainly say that, pending the conclusion of the final Agreement, the provisional guarantee was reciprocal.

(The meeting adjourned at 6.50 p.m.)

No. 3

Viscount Halifax to Sir W. Seeds (Moscow)

No. 54 Telegraphic [C 4575/54/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 4, 1939, 7.0 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 51.¹

I approve your language. I cannot find any justification for M. Litvinov's attitude. Soviet Ambassador here has been kept informed at every stage.

2. On March 19 (my despatch No. 190²) I explained to him the difficulties we saw in M. Litvinov's proposal for a conference at Bucharest and said that while we did not rule it out we had a proposal of our own, not altogether dissimilar, which we thought was better calculated to achieve the results we wanted.

3. That proposal (the Four-Power Declaration) was put to the Soviet Government by Your Excellency on March 21 (your telegram No. 39³). On the following day Soviet Government informed you that they accepted text of declaration and would sign 'as soon as both France and Poland have accepted and promised their signatures'.

4. On March 23 (my telegram No. 37⁴) we expressed to Soviet Ambassador our appreciation of this reply but intimated that while we had as yet no final answer from the Polish Government we understood that latter would hesitate before committing themselves.

5. On March 29 (my despatch No. 237⁵) Soviet Ambassador was told that in view of the Polish attitude we had to recognise that it was useless to pursue the idea of a Four-Power Declaration, and that we had therefore been considering what other line we could usefully take. He was told that the reason for this change of plan was that it now appeared that the Polish Government would be unwilling to be associated openly with the Soviet Government in any such declaration. Their attitude on this point, as understood here, was due not to any feeling of hostility to the Soviet Government, but to the reflection that such open association with them would merely increase indignation of German Government. When I spoke to the Soviet Ambassador on March 31 (my telegram No. 51⁶) he said that the Soviet Government, although they thought it groundless, understood the fear of the Poles, which was that if Soviet troops came into Poland, Polish conditions were such that the contacts that would be made would probably produce disturbing effects on Polish society.

¹ See Volume IV of this Series, No. 597.

² Ibid., No. 433.

³ Ibid., No. 461.

⁴ Not printed. This telegram summarized the conversation recorded in despatch No. 214 to Moscow, printed in Volume IV of this Series, No. 552.

⁵ No. 4. The substance of the conversation recorded in No. 4 was telegraphed to Sir W. Seeds on March 29 in Foreign Office telegram No. 46, printed in Volume IV of this Series, No. 565.

⁶ Not printed. This telegram summarized the conversation recorded in despatch No. 232 to Moscow, printed in Volume IV of this Series, No. 589.

6. The Soviet Ambassador was on March 29 given a provisional outline of the new course we were contemplating which would involve our giving assurances, together with France, to Poland and Roumania. Soviet Ambassador recognised that this would be a revolutionary change in British policy and that it would increase enormously the confidence of other countries. It was made clear in the conversation that we had no intention of excluding the Soviet Government, since the Soviet Ambassador was told that if Poland and Roumania were engaged in conflict with Germany they would no doubt be glad of the active assistance of the Soviet Government, if the latter were disposed to accord it, in whatever way was most suitable and effective.

7. Before any further statement on this new proposal could be made to the Soviet Ambassador circumstances arose which made it necessary for the Prime Minister to make a declaration in the House of Commons on afternoon of March 31.⁷ Soviet Ambassador was informed of purport of that statement in the morning of March 31, before it was made (my telegram No. 51).

8. If M. Litvinov complains that it is not true to say, as the Prime Minister did, that he had 'no doubt that the principles on which we are acting are fully understood and appreciated by the Soviet Government', the answer is that the Soviet Ambassador told me on March 31 that Soviet policy had recently been defined by Stalin as assistance against aggression for those who fought for their independence and therefore they were certainly prepared to help Poland and any other country that was attacked and resisted. The principles by which His Majesty's Government were moved to make their Polish declaration were precisely the same; and it seemed therefore self-evident that these principles would be both understood and appreciated by Soviet Government.

Repeated to Berlin, Paris, Bucharest and Warsaw.

⁷ See Volume IV of this Series, No. 582 and Parl. Deb., 5th ser., H. of C., vol. 345, col. 2415.

No. 4

Viscount Halifax to Sir W. Seeds (Moscow)

No. 237 [C 4692/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 4, 1939*

Sir,

At the end of a conversation with Sir A. Cadogan on the 29th March, the Soviet Ambassador referred to the Prime Minister's statement in the House of Commons on the 28th March, and in particular to his replies to supplementary questions by Mr. Greenwood, M.P., and Mr. Dalton, M.P. As regards the former, M. Maisky drew attention to the Prime Minister's words: 'It will, at any rate, be readily understood from what I have said previously that what the Government have in mind goes a great deal further than consultation.' As regards the latter, he drew attention to the words: 'I will say this, that the Government have made perfectly clear to the other

Governments with whom they are in consultation what His Majesty's Government are prepared to do in certain circumstances.'¹ M. Maisky said that he was rather puzzled by these replies. In the first place, he was not aware that His Majesty's Government were proposing to go further than consultation, and, in the second place, his Government had not, so far as he was aware, been kept informed as to what action His Majesty's Government were prepared to take beyond consultation.

2. In regard to the first point, Sir A. Cadogan reminded M. Maisky that the proposal for consultation contemplated consultation with a view to concerting measures, and therefore went a little bit further than pure consultation, and M. Maisky accepted this. In regard to the second point, he was reminded of a conversation that Sir A. Cadogan had a short while ago with him when he asked whether he could be told anything in regard to the result of our soundings of other Governments on the proposed Four-Power Declaration.² As Sir A. Cadogan had then hinted to His Excellency, it appeared that the Polish Government at least would be unwilling to be associated openly with the Soviet Government in any such declaration. Their attitude on this point was, as we understood it, due not to any feeling of hostility towards the Soviet Government, but to the reflection that such open association with them would, in the circumstances, merely increase the fury and indignation of the German Government. Sir A. Cadogan said that we had had to recognise that it was useless to pursue the idea of the Four-Power Declaration, and His Majesty's Government had therefore been considering what other line they could usefully take. It seemed that in present circumstances the countries nearest to the German menace and most exposed to attack were Poland and Roumania, and His Majesty's Government had come to the conclusion that it was essential to ascertain what the spirit of resistance of those two countries would be and in what way it could best be fortified. They were therefore contemplating the possibility of giving assurances, together with the French Government, to the Polish and Roumanian Governments in the hope that that would encourage them successfully to resist further German expansion. If those countries were determined to resist and were ultimately engaged in a conflict with Germany, they would no doubt be glad of the sympathy and, indeed, of the active assistance of the Soviet Government, if the latter were disposed to accord it, in whatever way might seem most suitable and effective.

3. M. Maisky asked whether what we were contemplating involved direct military assistance to Poland and Roumania, to which Sir A. Cadogan replied that that was what those countries would require and that we were indeed contemplating the possibility of giving assurances to that effect. Sir A. Cadogan said that the matter was at the moment still under consideration, and His Excellency must not take it from him that a firm decision had been taken, though he personally thought that it was likely that His Majesty's Government would be ready to give such assurances.

4. M. Maisky asked whether the French Government agreed to this course,

¹ See Parl. Deb., 5th ser., H. of C., vol. 345, cols. 1883-5.

² See Volume IV of this Series, No. 552.

to which Sir A. Cadogan replied that we had been discussing it with them and they appeared to be sympathetic to it. M. Maisky remarked that, if we adopted this course, that would be a revolutionary change in British policy and might have most far-reaching results. It would increase enormously the confidence of other countries and might have a very great effect.

5. Sir A. Cadogan said that he knew I would wish to keep in touch with His Excellency and keep him informed of developments, and that when the final decision had been taken I would doubtless inform him of it.

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

No. 5

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw)

No. 179 [C 4696/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 4, 1939*

Sir,

The Polish Ambassador was asked to call at this Department on the 30th March, to be given the outline of the proposals which have been put to the Polish and Roumanian Governments in accordance with my telegram to Your Excellency, No. 56.¹ Count Raczyński expressed himself as extremely gratified, and added that in his opinion the Polish Government were bound to go to the assistance of Roumania if attacked, since from the strategic point of view an independent Roumania was absolutely essential to the existence of Poland, who otherwise would have to depend entirely on the Soviet Union for her communication with the outer world via the Mediterranean; in other words, in a war with Germany, an independent Roumania was of vital importance to Poland.

2. The Ambassador enquired at this point whether His Majesty's Government intended in the immediate future to make any public statement regarding their Polish policy. He was told that, pending the conclusion of the present negotiations, it was unlikely that any public announcement would be made, unless, of course, the situation were suddenly to deteriorate and there was reason to fear that Germany might be contemplating immediate action.

3. Count Raczyński was asked about the state of relations between Poland and Germany within the last few days. He declared that no negotiations of any kind were proceeding with Germany. At the end of last year Poland had hoped to be able to discuss with Germany a new Danzig settlement, but it had never been found possible to start these discussions. It was true that from time to time the German Government put out various feelers and suggestions, but as these had been impossible of acceptance they had always been brushed aside. Of this nature were the so-called demands on Poland referred to in your telegram No. 91²; i.e., a change in the status of Danzig, a motor

¹ See Volume IV of this Series, No. 538.

² Ibid., No. 564.

road across the Corridor and adherence to the Anti-Comintern Pact. He personally thought that it had been arranged purposely that the President of the Diet should commit the indiscretion of referring to the existence of these demands so as to enable the Polish Government formally and publicly to deny that they had ever been made.

4. As regards the German press campaign against Poland, Count Raczynski said that this campaign was not of the same nature as that which had been launched by Germany before her attack on Czecho-Slovakia. In the present case it had been limited to certain organs of the German press, instead of the whole press being mobilised, as had been the case with Czecho-Slovakia; and he deduced from this distinction that in the present case the German Government did not intend that the campaign should be carried to a point where it might be difficult for them to retreat from the position which they had taken up. On the contrary, he suspected that the object of the present campaign was to exercise a gentle pressure on the Polish Government so as to keep them from abandoning their German connexion. It was merely a mild form of blackmail and not the precursor of open hostilities.

5. Count Raczynski, in fact, while pessimistic as to the ultimate prospects of peace, did not believe that Germany was planning any immediate attack on Poland. He thought it far more likely that Hitler would choose the easier path of continuing his penetration in Central Europe, so as to consolidate his position in Hungary, Roumania and perhaps Bulgaria, with the object, *inter alia*, of outflanking Poland on the east, and thus undermining her strategic position *vis-à-vis* of [*sic*] Germany.

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

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No. 6

Mr. Shepherd (Danzig) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 11)
No. 86 [C 4990/92/55]

DANZIG, April 4, 1939

My Lord,

Recent developments in the Danzig-German-Polish situation have been so rapid that it has not been feasible to deal with them otherwise than telegraphically, so I have now the honour to submit to Your Lordship as a matter of record the following chronological summary of the principal events and incidents connected with those developments so far as they affect the Free City.

2. When the High Commissioner passed through Berlin, just as the Czecho-Slovakian crisis was developing, during his journey from Geneva to Danzig, where he arrived on the 14th March, he received such disquieting warnings from official and reliable unofficial sources there of impending developments in the Free City that he decided that he ought to return to Geneva almost at

once. Before so doing, however, he determined to try to see Herr Greiser,¹ but was only able to do so on the afternoon of the 16th March, and Herr Forster,² but, after first being told that the Gauleiter was absent from Danzig, he subsequently learned that he had entered a private nursing home for an operation and could receive no one.

3. Meanwhile, Professor Burckhardt had interviews with the Polish Commissioner-General, with Dr. Böttcher, the head of the Foreign Section of the Senate, with my German and Italian colleagues and with me. Although the High Commissioner apparently imparted some at least of the sensational impressions which he had gained in Berlin to those with whom he spoke there, all but the Polish Commissioner-General seem to have discounted the probability of an early radical change in the status of the Free City. The Commissioner-General insisted that any attempt to alter its status would be answered with armed resistance on the part of Poland.

4. When Professor Burckhardt questioned Dr. von Janson about Herr Forster, the German Consul-General impatiently declared that the latter had been guilty of yet another of his indiscretions by telling the contractor who is renovating the Uphagen House (the Patrician show-house of Danzig) under the supervision of the Gauleiter that the work must be completed by the beginning of April, when the house was to be occupied by the Führer. Observing Professor Burckhardt's expression of surprise, Dr. von Janson realised that he himself might have been guilty of an indiscretion and endeavoured hastily to cover his confusion by insisting that such sensational stories were, of course, ridiculous.

5. On the 20th March Herr Forster's paper, the 'Danziger Vorposten', published a sympathetic reference to his illness at such a critical juncture, but announced the Gauleiter's pleasure at developments in Europe which might have such far-reaching consequences for Danzig.

6. National Socialist successes have hitherto normally been celebrated here by a three-day display of flags; the beginning and end of such displays being indicated by a small but prominent notice on the front page of the Danzig German newspapers. On the 20th March the 'Danziger Vorposten' departed from this procedure when it published a short article requesting Danzigers to cease displaying their flags for the incorporation of Czechoslovakia in the Reich as from that evening. In consequence, the City resumed its normal aspect on the 21st March, when my Dutch colleague reported seeing a great concentration of German troops at Stolz on the other side of the Polish Corridor.

7. It was generally anticipated that on the 25th March the Memel Landtag would vote for the immediate return of the Memelland to Germany; on the 22nd March, however, Danzigers awoke to special editions of the Danzig German newspapers announcing that Lithuania had given back the Memelland to Germany and ordering the Free City to celebrate the event with the usual display of flags. It was also celebrated officially in the principal

¹ President of the Danzig Senate.

² Gauleiter of Danzig.

reception hall of the Government building by a meeting of members of the Administration and party, to whom Herr Greiser made a speech in which he rejoiced in the event, and emphasised the particular sympathy which it aroused in the Free City. He terminated his remarks with the words 'till we meet again in this room'.

8. The announcement in the Danzig newspapers on the 23rd March that Herr Hitler had proceeded to Memel with a relatively powerful fleet, coupled with a prominent and urgent notice in the same newspapers that the inhabitants should withdraw all their flags that evening, caused an instant nervous reaction that this was a prelude to a *coup* in Danzig. Members of the Polish Commissariat-General stated once more that any such step would be met by armed force. The same night thirteen trains of rolling-stock were withdrawn from the Free City by the Polish authorities, and in the small hours of the following morning Polish reservists in this area were recalled to the colours.

9. On the evening of the 23rd March the President of the Senate gave his annual dinner in the Old Town Hall for the local foreign official representatives, but, contrary to the procedure in the previous years, this year not only all those representatives, except the Poles, and their wives, but also the leading local officials and their wives were invited, and all who possessed uniforms were requested to wear them, whilst photographs of the event were taken during the evening. Herr Greiser was obviously *distract* until he had made his speech, which was skilfully worded so as to rejoice without causing offence to anyone in the peaceful return of Memel to the Reich, and Dr. Böttcher, who sat directly opposite me, was more nervous and fidgety, especially during that speech, than I have ever seen him before. After his speech, Herr Greiser and my German and Italian colleagues somewhat ostentatiously toasted one another in a loving cup, whilst the other guests looked on. This incident was commented upon without envy by those consular colleagues who were not included in it. They also remarked that the Danish wife of the German colleague was absent in Denmark, where she went at the time of the September crisis. Although the function was as enjoyable as could be expected in the circumstances, there was a noticeable tension throughout the evening and considerable apprehensive discussion between individuals as to prospective developments in the Free City.

10. On the 24th March there was a secret session at the Senate of about sixty heads of departments, who were adjured by Herr Greiser to allow nothing whatever to be done by any of their departments which could in any way be construed as provocative to the Poles, and they were warned that anyone guilty of such an act would be liable to lose his position.

11. The news that the German fleet had returned from Memel without visiting Danzig caused obvious relief, and some members of the Polish Commissariat-General admitted that to meet the emergency the Poles had concentrated their troops along their northern frontiers, but they explained that this was necessary because they were aware of similar German concentrations on the other sides of those frontiers.

12. On the 25th March the tension which had developed during the latter part of the week diminished appreciably, and, after a quiet week-end, it had almost disappeared by the 27th March, when I had occasion to visit Gdynia and observed some Polish military activity between the Danzig-Polish frontier and that port.

13. The same day the Danzig Senate published a decree restricting and regulating the possession and use of carrier-pigeons within the Free City.

14. On the 28th March there was a sudden recurrence of acute nervous tension, apparently based on reports or rumours of large German troop concentrations in Elbing, Marienburg and Stolp, and of similar Polish concentrations with machine guns and artillery in and around Gdynia, Kartuzy and Tczew, where the bridge across the Vistula was stated to be heavily protected with barbed wire, machine guns, &c.

15. On the 29th and 30th March Herr Greiser and Dr. Böttcher paid a flying visit to Herr von Ribbentrop in Berlin, and, although no public mention of this visit was made here, the news of it leaked out and tended to increase the existing nervousness.

16. On the afternoon of the 30th March I observed considerable numbers of Polish troops between the Danzig-Polish frontier and Gdynia, and there seemed to be a general anticipation of a week-end *coup*, especially as representatives of the leading German newspapers arrived in Danzig from Berlin, and there was a persistent rumour that the Danzig Senate was going to apply to Germany for protection, with the maintenance of the privileges enjoyed here by Poland, in the hope of thus securing the return of Danzig to the Reich without an armed conflict. Mr. Chamberlain's declaration in the House of Commons that afternoon³ caused the prospects of a week-end *coup* to recede, so that a more normal atmosphere now prevails.

17. My Dutch colleague informed me that, when he passed through Stolp on the 3rd April, the unusually large numbers of German troops that he had observed there on the 21st March were no longer visible.

18. On the 3rd and 4th April both Danzig German newspapers were vehement in their denunciation of the British in general and Mr. Chamberlain in particular.

19. An unofficial boycott has developed as between the German and Polish elements here, and this, combined with the loss of transit trade with Czecho-Slovakia, is having a definitely unfavourable effect upon the already unsatisfactory economic conditions in the Free City.

20. Copies of this despatch are being sent to His Majesty's Ambassadors at Berlin and Warsaw.

I have, &c.,
G. SHEPHERD

³ The reference is to the Prime Minister's declaration on March 31. See Volume IV of this Series, No. 582 and Parl. Deb., 5th ser., H. of C., vol. 345, col. 2415.

No. 7

Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 5, 4.50 p.m.)

No. 234 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 4821/54/18]

BERLIN, April 5, 1939

My telegram No. 218.¹

Official at Ministry of Foreign Affairs who is dealing with so-called British encirclement policy informed member of my staff last night that British guarantee to Poland had come as a complete surprise to the German Government. He deplored the fact that Great Britain had taken this step as now the Poles were digging their toes in over Danzig and the Corridor settlement and were even ignoring German proposals. He emphasised the fact that it was an impossible situation for Germany to remain cut in two by the Corridor and that the German Government might find it beyond their power to restrain the German community in Danzig. Official added that it had been in his personal opinion an error of judgment on the part of Germany not to have settled the Danzig-Corridor problem before the occupation of Czecho-Slovakia.

Information may be of some significance in view of its source.

When I called on the State Secretary yesterday evening on another matter he looked sad and worried and [? was] unwilling to talk politics.

Repeated to Warsaw.

¹ Not printed. This telegram of April 2 gave a general appreciation of Herr Hitler's speech at Wilhelmshaven on April 1.

No. 8

Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 5, 4.50 p.m.)

No. 235 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 4822/54/18]

BERLIN, April 5, 1939

My telegram No. 234.¹

A diplomatic colleague² who should be better informed than any other and with whom I have always had special friendly relations told me in the greatest confidence this morning that Germany had been asking two things of Poland.

1. The cession in an amicable way of Danzig.
2. The right to construct a German corridor, i.e. a motor road, across the Polish Corridor.

In both of these matters Germany was prepared to give fullest regard to Polish interests both in regard to trade with and through Danzig and promised no interference with Polish access to the sea through Polish Corridor.

¹ No. 7.

² In a later telegram of April 5 Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes reported that this colleague was Signor Attolico.

He said that negotiations were proceeding favourably until Prime Minister's statement in Parliament on March 31³ but since then as confirmed in my telegram under reference the Poles had been sticking their toes in and a violent anti-German feeling was being roused in Poland. He was pessimistic about this as he feared ugly incidents provoked especially by students.

He was also very apprehensive of effect on Nazi opinion of the present negotiations for an anti-aggression agreement which, despite all assertions to the contrary, would only confirm the German impression of encirclement. He thought His Majesty's Government had gone too far in committing themselves to an agreement and that Herr Hitler would have been checked and Polish-German negotiations successfully concluded had His Majesty's Government limited themselves to a statement that they were interested in aggression in Eastern Europe even to the extent of armed intervention rather than propose an international agreement on the subject. The result was that the Poles were being unnecessarily roused against the Germans and also Herr Hitler was in addition infuriated over encirclement.

Repeated to Warsaw.

³ See Volume IV of this Series, No. 582, and Parl. Deb., 5th ser., H. of C., vol. 345, col. 2415.

No. 9

Sir R. Hoare (Bucharest) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 5, 9.40 p.m.)
No. 102 Telegraphic [C 5035/15/18]

BUCHAREST, April 5, 1939, 9.10 p.m.

Following for Sir O. Sargent:

Minister for Foreign Affairs who is a rather sick man is unhappy about telegrams from the Chargé d'Affaires in London suggesting in somewhat unmeasured language that 'delay' of Roumanian Government in replying to proposals in your telegram No. 65¹ is causing serious dissatisfaction and that the press is making disagreeable references to Hungarian territorial claims.

If you could send a short official reply to my telegram No. 96² something to the effect that views of the Roumanian Government contained therein are being examined with sympathy I think that the effect would be good.

¹ See Volume IV of this Series, No. 538.

² Ibid., No. 603.

✓ *Visit of the Polish Foreign Minister, April 4-6, 1939*

RECORD OF CONVERSATIONS

Third Meeting¹

[C 5050/54/18]

(In the Prime Minister's Room at the House of Commons, on April 5, at 5 p.m.)

Present: as at second meeting.

British Proposal to Poland and Roumania—(continued).

The Prime Minister suggested that consideration should be given to the matters which it had not been found possible to settle, particularly the position if Great Britain were attacked by Germany, not directly, but through some neutral State.

The conversations appeared to him to be tending towards a result different from that which public opinion was expecting, namely, towards a bilateral Anglo-Polish agreement, whereas what was hoped for was an arrangement by which a number of States would band themselves round Great Britain, France and Poland as a nucleus.

He assured M. Beck that he fully appreciated M. Beck's reasons for thinking that this latter plan was not a good one. He had very much in his mind the importance of not making an arrangement which might precipitate a conflict. Anything that was done should therefore be scrutinised with that consideration very much in mind. He himself, having been present at the conversations, was well aware of the objections, but the public and members of Parliament had not had that advantage and might be suspicious about the results. He was particularly anxious that the result should not be regarded as a selfish arrangement made by the two countries in their own interests: it ought to be regarded as a step which, while undoubtedly in our own interests, was directed against any attempt at world domination, wherever this might show itself. These suspicions would be all the more deeply-rooted because of the difficulties about Russia, even though these difficulties might not be based on facts, but on prejudices and preconceptions based on a particular ideology.

His conclusion was that it was most important, when making a public statement about the agreement, to show that it was part of a general policy and not merely devoted to a local or minor danger. It would make all the difference from the British point of view if it could be said that the reciprocal undertaking which the Polish Government were ready to give us in the permanent arrangement would cover not only the case of a direct attack upon Great Britain, but also the case in which Great Britain was engaged in war for a principle which had been violated by an attack on a country on whose behalf we should be acting.

¹ See Nos. 1 and 2 for a record of the first and second meetings.

M. Beck said that by his instructions he was obliged to treat the question by stages. He was fully authorised to declare that the guarantee between Great Britain and Poland in the event of a direct attack was reciprocal. As regards the question of an attack through neutral countries, he could say that, so far as he personally was concerned, he was convinced that the question could be examined by the two Governments. As regards Roumania, and perhaps Hungary, he had less authority to speak. He must first discuss matters with the Governments of the countries concerned. Polish public opinion would not understand how questions pertaining to Roumania should not have been discussed in the first place between Warsaw and Bucharest.

The Prime Minister said he was more concerned with the second point than with the third. It would be unsatisfactory for His Majesty's Government if they should have to make public some document in which on the British side there should be no reservation, while on the Polish side there should be a reservation, even though that reservation was accompanied by an indication that the question might be one for discussion.

M. Beck observed that there was a difference between what could be made public and what was the real intention of the Polish Government. On the latter point he could promise favourable consideration of the question. In the official communiqué it might perhaps be said that the two countries had agreed to consult together whenever there was a threat directed against either of them which might involve them in war.

The Prime Minister said that he did not much like talking about consultation. Democratic Governments were always being jeered at because they could not promise anything more definite than consultation.

M. Beck said he would not press the point. He was merely trying to find a formula.

The Prime Minister said that, so far as Holland and Belgium at any rate were concerned, the question was one that came very closely home to us. An attack on the independence of Holland or Belgium would be equivalent to an attack on our own independence.

M. Beck said that of the four countries concerned (Holland, Belgium, Switzerland and Denmark), Belgium enjoyed special sympathy in Poland, and he thought every effort would be made to cover the case of Belgium. He realised that, in view of the special position of Holland and Belgium, they could be regarded in a sense as the maritime frontier of Great Britain. There was, in his own personal view, a strong case for including them in the permanent agreement between Great Britain and Poland; but this was a question which the Polish Government alone could decide, and he himself had no authority to commit them. He had to weigh very carefully every word that he said, and he was anxious that his cautious attitude should not be interpreted as showing lack of good will.

The Prime Minister observed that, if one looked into the future, the

position of Poland would be precarious unless she could count on strong support from the west which would engage strong German forces. Unless the proposed agreement were a pretty complete one, it might not be possible to achieve the purpose in view. He would like to find a form of words which would not carry M. Beck further than he wished to go, but which would indicate that some further examination of the point would be made.

He thought that the communiqué might say that the two countries would enter into a permanent undertaking to come to each other's assistance in the event of action which threatened their independence, and that they would consider further the various circumstances in which the threat to their independence might arise.

M. Beck said that this idea appealed to him, though he would like to see a draft.

The Prime Minister emphasised that, when it came to drafting the permanent agreement, the point about Belgium and Holland, &c., would be a vital one.

M. Beck fully realised this. His own personal view was that, when the permanent agreement was drafted, it would have to include something about these countries. He himself had never thought otherwise, though he repeated that he had no authority to commit the Polish Government on the point.

The Prime Minister then reverted to Roumania.

He understood from M. Beck that, in his view, an attack on Roumania was unlikely to come except through Hungary, and that to enter into an arrangement to defend Roumania against an attack through Hungary would not be likely to improve the relations between Hungary and Poland, and that, therefore, M. Beck would prefer to leave the matter open for the present.

M. Beck had also said on the previous day that if Hungary became a vassal of Germany then the situation would be different. He wished to direct M. Beck's attention to that possibility. One only had to look at the map to see that if Germany established a protectorate over Hungary, she would be in an advantageous strategical position to continue her advance towards Roumania or Yugoslavia, as the case might be. It would be unwise to exclude the possibility of some such plan being adopted, and Hitler, when he acted, acted quickly. Had M. Beck considered the possibility of this, and what did he think should be done if it happened?

M. Beck admitted that these methods had been employed. The Hungarians, however, were by tradition deeply attached to their independence. He did not think the chances of a German swoop with the collaboration of Hungary should be put very high. In any event, it was desirable to do nothing to make such a development more likely. Hungary knew that Roumania was the ally of Poland and he could not himself believe that Hungary would allow herself to be used as a tool by Germany against Roumania. Between Hungary and Poland there were a thousand years of traditional friendship.

The two countries had declared before the League of Nations in 1921 that each of them would decline to sign any document directed against the other.

The Prime Minister said that this was not quite the situation he had in mind. Suppose that Hitler had a plan for action against Hungary by a certain date and had accumulated overwhelming forces on her frontiers. He would start a campaign about the grievances of the German inhabitants and how the Hungarians could not keep order. He might then send for the Regent or the Prime Minister, as he had sent for M. Hacha, and say he could not stand it any longer and that if Hungary wished to live in peace she would have to accept protection from the Reich. If she refused, he would march in or bomb Budapest. It was true that Hungary might be different from Czecho-Slovakia, but suppose that the Hungarian Government said they would not agree, what would happen then? He was assuming that Hungary would not willingly agree to a protectorate and that it would have to be imposed on her by force.

M. Beck said that if Hungary found herself in that position, and if she showed a disposition to defend herself, he himself thought that Poland would support her.

The Prime Minister said he assumed that in that event France would have no treaty obligation to come to Poland's assistance.

M. Beck agreed that this was so.

He observed that it was against the tradition of the Polish Government to express definite opinions about third countries without directly consulting them. He would place himself in a difficult position by expressing a definite opinion on the Hungarian point which the Prime Minister had raised. He could, however, say that Poland was keenly interested in Hungarian independence. So long as Hungary maintained that independence, he thought that this should be taken into consideration in any plan that might be adopted, and that every effort should be made to help to preserve Hungarian independence.

The Prime Minister said he did not wish to press M. Beck on this point; but he had some reason to suppose that some such plan was under consideration in some quarters in Germany. He had not asked M. Beck to pledge himself, but had wished to know his attitude. He thought it important that this issue should be considered.

M. Beck said that his own view was that it was quite likely that Germany's economic ambitions in those regions might be far-reaching. On the other hand, he did not think that there was any serious danger of German political action outside Germany's present frontiers. The position of Slovakia was interesting from this point of view. In Slovakia German action had been extremely cautious and hesitating. For the present he did not think there was danger of political action, though economic pressure was likely.

The Prime Minister remarked that one might very well lead to the other.

M. Beck said that if Roumania were subjected to economic pressure and if Roumania resisted, then he thought Roumania should be given every assistance in maintaining that resistance. Poland was ready to do what she could to help from the military point of view. If there was strong economic pressure upon Roumania without a military threat, other countries ought to help Roumania economically, while Poland could help by sending officers and helping to develop Roumania's military organisation.

Eastern Europe had recently gone through a period of fear psychosis. Poland was the first country to react, and was ready to help any country which followed her example. For instance, Poland had given assistance to Lithuania in the economic sphere by facilitating transit.

The Prime Minister asked how far Poland had been dependent upon Czecho-Slovakia for munitions.

M. Beck said not at all. Poland was largely self-supporting in this respect, and supplied 80 per cent. of the needs of her army. She also exported arms, and even supplied guns to Great Britain. Poland manufactured fighter aircraft, aircraft engines, air frames, light artillery and infantry equipment. She had ordered naval artillery in Sweden and other types of artillery in France.

The Prime Minister asked whether M. Beck anticipated any attack upon Yugoslavia.

M. Beck said Poland had no agreement with Yugoslavia, but maintained close relations. He had been somewhat surprised when the Prime Minister had first mentioned Yugoslavia as one of the countries which might be brought into the proposed system. Yugoslavia was only interested in two countries, namely, Germany and Italy. Yugoslavia was a country which caused a certain complication in the relations between Germany and Italy. Recent news about Albania had rather taken him aback. He had known M. Stoyadinovitch, who had kept him well informed. M. Stoyadinovitch's policy was to avoid wide engagements and to concentrate on improving relations with Yugoslavia's neighbours. He was not quite sure whether the present Yugoslav Government would follow the same policy.²

His own feeling was that Yugoslavia would try to hedge between Germany and Italy; while in time of peace she would probably prefer to co-operate with Italy rather than Germany, in time of war she would probably choose Germany rather than Italy.

The Prime Minister asked why M. Beck had been taken aback by events in Albania.

M. Beck replied that he had had news that morning which seemed to show

² M. Stoyadinovich's Government resigned on February 5. The new Prime Minister was M. Cvetkovic.

that Italy was contemplating action in Albania which would have the effect of causing a deterioration in the relations between Italy and Yugoslavia.³

Communiqué

The Prime Minister said that no draft communiqué had yet been prepared. He would have to make a statement in the House of Commons the following day, and he proposed to use for that purpose the text of the communiqué and to say that what he was reading was an agreed statement.

Count Raczynski said that it would be desirable to introduce into the communiqué a reference to the emigration problem, particularly the Jewish problem.

Some discussion took place on this point and a provisional text was prepared.

It was then agreed that a draft communiqué should be prepared and submitted to M. Beck later in the evening.

(The meeting adjourned at 7 p.m.)

The following is the text of the communiqué which was subsequently agreed upon:

'Communiqué

'The conversations with M. Beck have covered a wide field and shown that the two Governments are in complete agreement upon certain general principles.

'It was agreed that the two countries were prepared to enter into an agreement of a permanent and reciprocal character to replace the present temporary and unilateral assurance given by His Majesty's Government to the Polish Government.

'Pending the completion of the permanent agreement, M. Beck gave His Majesty's Government an assurance that the Polish Government would consider themselves under an obligation to render assistance to His Majesty's Government under the same conditions as those contained in the temporary assurance already given by His Majesty's Government to Poland.

'Like the temporary assurance, the permanent agreement would not be directed against any other country, but would be designed to assure Great Britain and Poland of mutual assistance in the event of any threat, direct or indirect, to the independence of either.

'It was recognised that certain matters, including a more precise definition of the various ways in which the necessity for such assistance might arise, would require further examination before the permanent agreement could be completed.

'It was understood that the arrangements above mentioned should not

³ See Chapter II.

preclude either Government from making agreements with other countries in the general interest of the consolidation of peace.'

A separate communiqué on the question of emigration of Jews from Poland was issued on the 6th April in the following terms:

'In the course of the recent conversations in London M. Beck expressed the desire that any international effort for the treatment of the Jewish problem should be extended to that of the Jews in Poland, and that Jewish emigrants from Poland should have their due share in any opportunity of settlement which may be found. M. Beck at the same time, at the request of the Roumanian Government, drew attention to the similar problem existing in Roumania.

'M. Beck was assured that His Majesty's Government fully appreciated the difficulties to which he had referred, and would at any time be ready to examine with the Polish and Roumanian Governments proposals for a solution of the particular problems arising in Poland and Roumania which are part of a larger problem.'

No. 11

Letter from Mr. Eden to Viscount Halifax

[C 5029/54/18]

17 FITZHARDINGE STREET, W.1, April 5, 1939

I enclose herewith a brief record of my conversation with Beck last night. I feel a little apprehensive at sending it because Beck so often asked me to treat it as confidential, but I feel that, none the less, you should see it for whatever it may be worth.

My own impression was that Beck was sincere in what he said of Poland's determination to resist, and that he was well pleased to have reached so close an understanding with us.

His attitude to Russia also seemed to me intelligible in view of the past relations of the two countries.

The least satisfactory part of our talk, as also the briefest, concerned Roumania. I could not help feeling that Beck was far from anxious that Roumania should be placed on a similar footing to Poland. In part this may be due to Poland's predilection for the role of a great Power, in part also to the fact that Poland is more anxious to ensure her own absolute safety than that of her neighbours. By this I do not mean that Beck or the Polish Government are short-sighted enough to ignore the fact that if Roumania is attacked by Germany, Poland would also be involved. Maybe the Polish calculation is the more limited one that, if there is to be a conflict in Eastern Europe, Poland would prefer that Roumania rather than herself should be the first victim.

As you know, I worked with Beck for many years and my impression of this

conversation was that he spoke with a much greater frankness than has been habitual with him of the relations of Poland with H.M.G. It was only in respect of third parties and particularly of Roumania that he seemed to cloak himself in those ambiguous phrases which he had always at his command.

ENCLOSURE IN NO. 11

M. Beck came to see me for three quarters of an hour last evening in the interval between an interview with the Prime Minister at the House of Commons and the Foreign Office Dinner.

M. Beck began by saying that there were certain things which it was difficult to say officially, but which he felt justified in stating to me as to a friend of many years' standing. He several times reiterated that his words to me were not to be taken as having official authority.

First, he wished to emphasise that Poland would in no circumstances submit to German rule, nor be included within the German sphere of influence. At the moment the Polish Government was controlled by an inner Cabinet of four, and at a recent meeting they had all been agreed as to this and had determined that they would rather see half the country devastated than submit to German rule. The Poles were a nation of soldiers, and they were convinced that thirty-five millions of Poles could not easily be wiped out. Nothing would induce them to submit to a repetition of partition. It had been Marshal Pilsudski's great achievement to re-create the Polish nation and that nation was determined to protect its existence at all costs.

Colonel Beck continued that it was difficult to express these sentiments in an official conversation without appearing to boast, but he begged me to believe that they represented the truth. As to armaments, Poland was making good progress and had even sold us some anti-aircraft guns. The morale of the country was excellent. If I could go to Warsaw, as he wished that I could, he would be proud to convince me of that. The city, which in normal times was inclined to a certain light-hearted irresponsibility, was now grimly determined.

M. Beck explained to me that his Government welcomed the declaration of H.M.G. and were prepared to reciprocate the assurances given to them. I would recollect how patient he had been over and over again in seeking to come to terms with Germany, but there were limits and those limits had now been reached. A halt had to be called, and so far as the Poles were concerned it would be called.

Some little time ago the German Ambassador had complained to him that Poland had a large force in arms in the neighbourhood of Danzig. 'You negotiate, then,' the Ambassador had complained, 'under the menace of bayonets.' M. Beck had replied that if this was so Poland was only copying the methods used by Germany herself.

In reply to a question, M. Beck expressed the belief that the result of his visit and of the agreement reached in London would be to deter Germany from taking any further step against Poland. Germany would be angry and

would bluster, but there was nothing she could do. He himself thought that the efficiency of the German army had been greatly exaggerated. Reports at the disposal of the Polish authorities went to confirm this.

In reply to a question of mine on the subject of Russia, M. Beck replied that if we chose to make an arrangement with Russia ourselves that would be no affair of Poland's. He believed, however, that if Poland and Russia were to be included together in an arrangement with the Western Powers now, the effect might be to provoke Germany to instant aggressive action.

In reply to questions about Roumania, M. Beck maintained that if Poland, Britain and France were to enter into an arrangement with Roumania now it would have the effect of finally driving Hungary into the arms of Germany. M. Beck professed to have some hopes that Hungary was not yet entirely subservient to the Axis. He laid emphasis on Hungarian national pride and pleaded that the moment was not yet ripe for such an arrangement with Roumania; though he admitted that the occasion might subsequently arise.

Finally, M. Beck reaffirmed his satisfaction with the close relations now existing between our two countries, a relationship which he averred had only become possible because the foundations had been carefully laid over a period of years.

No. 12

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 10)

No. 83 [C 4898/1110/55]

WARSAW, April 5, 1939

My Lord,

In view of recent developments it seemed useful to examine the strength of the Polish armed forces at the present moment and I therefore requested my Military and Air Attachés to furnish me with reports on the subject, which I have the honour to enclose herewith.

2. They indicate that Poland can in the first three weeks put some fifty-four divisions into the field and an air force of about six hundred aeroplanes, of which probably three-quarters are, however, not capable of competing with the most modern German aircraft. It seems therefore unlikely that Poland can hope to defend the Corridor or her western frontier, but that she might be compelled eventually to fall back on the Vistula.

3. It must be remembered that Poland will presumably be cut off from all communications with the outside world in the Baltic and that, should Roumania be involved, her southern outlet may also be blocked. While every effort is being made to increase the local production of armaments, it is estimated that at least twelve months will be required before the Polish Army can in any way rely on home production of armaments on a large scale, and after the outbreak of war the raw material supplies, which are near the German frontier, are likely to fall into German hands. The importance for Poland of a friendly Russia is thus of paramount importance.

4. I presume that the Polish Navy, which consists of only a few destroyers and submarines would, in view of the fact that the Corridor would be among the first German objectives, have to intern itself in some Baltic port or would be otherwise eliminated.

5. Doubtless full consideration is being given to the problem of what can be done from the west to relieve German pressure on Poland in the event of war, but I feel it my duty to point out that while the spirit of the Polish people leaves nothing to be desired, the Polish Army is so lacking in modern equipment that it cannot be expected to offer more than a limited resistance to a large-scale German offensive.

6. I am sending a copy of this despatch to His Majesty's Representative at Berlin.

I have, &c.,
H. W. KENNARD

ENCLOSURE I IN NO. 12

Lieutenant-Colonel Sword to Sir H. Kennard

WARSAW, April 5, 1939

H.E. The Ambassador.

1. The following is a brief summary of the main military considerations affecting the war effort which Poland, in present circumstances, can be expected to make in the event of an attack by Germany, assuming assistance of Poland by Great Britain and France.

2. I propose to examine this question mainly from the point of view of the employment of ground forces; the air aspect has been dealt with by the Air Attaché.

3. The time that has elapsed since last December has seen no marked alteration in the capacity for war of the Polish Army, though progress undoubtedly continues to be made in anti-aircraft equipment, and the production of armaments has been still further accelerated since March 15.

4. One difficulty which the Higher Command do not yet appear to have solved is the question of the administration of the Army. This is primarily the responsibility of the Ministry of War, which is in a different building and separate from the General Inspectorate and General Staff. Broadly speaking, the General Inspectorate and General Staff are still responsible for planning and the Ministry of War for execution. But the two merge with one another in questions of administration in a way which is said sometimes to cause a certain amount of friction. The recent departure of General Rayski 'on long leave' shows clearly that the strained relations which have for some time existed between the General Staff and the Commander of the Polish Air Force have finally reached breaking point, and involves the very serious decision of replacing an officer of marked ability. These two instances of difficulties which the Polish General Staff have had to contend with do not imply that there is something seriously amiss with the leadership of the Army. The prestige of the General Inspector, Marshal Smigly-Rydz, seems

to remain unimpaired in Army circles, and the general standard of capacity and training is believed to be high among the senior ranks of the Army. The influence of French higher training is still apparent through the attachment of Polish officers to the French Staff College, but a tendency to follow German training methods to some extent may be leading to a certain confusion between the two doctrines.

5. While the general ability of the officers is high, the low standard of intelligence of the average conscript shows little improvement in spite of efforts to improve the general standard of education in Poland, and there is still a grave shortage of good N.C.O.s, particularly in the non-technical branches of the Army. A further weakness is the fact that some five millions of the total population of 35 million comprise the Ukrainian minority, and though these have been less troublesome of late and have even exhibited recent signs of a *rapprochement* with the Government such as participation in the Air Defence Loan, they remain nevertheless a dangerous field for German propaganda. However, they are distributed as evenly as possible throughout the units of the Polish Army, and are believed not to be incorporated in formations on the German frontiers, which are as far as possible of pure Polish blood. The total reached yesterday of 140,000,000 zloté subscribed to the Air Defence Loan only due to be floated today, is a good practical example of the way in which the country has rallied behind the Government in the face of the German threat, and it seems indeed probable that the various Ukrainian elements as well as the other minorities in Poland, including the Jews, would unite still more closely with the Government in the event of war. Tough and courageous, the Polish soldier of today would probably live up to the high standard of endurance set by his forebears in the past.

6. The number of men of all annual classes between 20 and 45 years of age and fit to carry arms is estimated at some five and a half million, but the number of trained reserves available since 1920 does not total more than about 2,200,000. Limitations of armament and equipment, however, preclude the incorporation of more than a fraction of these totals in field formations, and a further surplus in various reserve formations of doubtful value except for limited guerilla warfare and internal security.

7. The peace establishment of the Polish Army remains at 30 infantry divisions and 15 cavalry brigades, and the total strength attained during the first three weeks of a war is not expected to exceed:

Infantry Divisions	54
Cavalry Divisions	1
Independent Cavalry Brigades	12
Armoured Battalions	12
Frontier Defence Corps Brigades	6

8. The capacity of this force is seriously limited by the inadequacy of the Polish Air Force, and by a serious shortage of anti-aircraft and heavy artillery, armoured fighting vehicles, and mechanical transport. The Stara-

chowice Armament Factory is now working 24-hour shifts endeavouring to make up leeway in artillery production, but in spite of the urgency of home requirements contracts for the sale abroad of 40-mm. Bofors guns are being adhered to. The question of finance is an over-riding factor in the whole question of armament production, and the need for foreign currency is paramount. There is no doubt that the fire power of a Polish infantry division remains markedly inferior to that of a corresponding German division.

9. As far as reserves for the Polish Army are concerned, any estimate is dependent on a number of indeterminate factors, and is necessarily speculative. It is believed, however, that an attempt is being made to amass a three-months' supply of raw materials in the Central Industrial District, though the extent to which this project has been effected is uncertain. The Polish General Staff profess the possession of adequate petrol reserves for their present needs, providing no considerable expansion takes place. Nevertheless, it is clear that the strenuous efforts at present being made to increase the industrial capacity of the country are still a long way from rendering the Polish Army self-supporting in a protracted war.

10. In Your Excellency's despatch No. 37,¹ dated 17th February 1939, the difficulties of Poland's trade position in a war in which Germany was involved were shown to be very great, and means of exterior communication are shown to be dependent upon a single railway communication with Roumania and routes via the U.S.S.R., as communications from Poland through Latvia and Lithuania emerge either into Russia or the Baltic Sea. The latter can be assumed to become a kind of German 'lake' even in the event of British naval assistance, during at least the early stages of a war with Germany; so that the attitude of the U.S.S.R. is vital to Poland from the point of view of supplies for her armed forces. While the import of war material could probably be arranged, the attitude of the Soviet and Polish Governments recently expressed seems to make it clear that little more than benevolent neutrality can yet be expected from Russia.

11. In my despatch No. D. 2,² dated 22nd March 1939, I dealt briefly with the strategical effect of recent German penetration into Czecho-Slovakia and Lithuania. The value of Roumania as an ally remains dependent upon the position of Hungary, which is still indeterminate, but it would appear unsafe to assume that Hungary would not perforce be precipitated into the German camp in the event of a general conflagration. Nearly the whole of Poland's southern frontier thus becomes a potential avenue for German invasion, and the Central Industrial District correspondingly more vulnerable to land attack. The vital Silesian industrial area has been rendered still more vulnerable to attack through the German advance along its southern border. Poland's exit to the sea via the Corridor remains virtually indefensible against Germany, and a further possibility of encirclement by Germany exists with the potential spread of Teutonic influence in Lithuania, consequent upon the cession of Memelland.

¹ Not printed.

² See Volume IV of the Series, No. 498.

12. The strategic importance of Polish communications remains very great, owing partly to the great length of frontier which she would be called upon to defend and also to the fact that the Central Industrial District is widely separated from its sources of raw materials, though the latter are in any event themselves vulnerable to German attack. The railway system is still hardly adequate for Poland's needs, and the construction of a new railway south of Warsaw designed to relieve congestion has not yet been completed, and Warsaw remains a serious and vulnerable bottle-neck.

The roads are improving, and though inadequate from the point of view of a western European Power, are nevertheless probably less suitable for the employment of Germany's mechanised forces than the comparatively slow-moving Polish troops, trained to live on the country. Polish cavalry is moreover eminently suited for employment on much Polish terrain adjacent to Germany. The great distances and wooded areas give ample scope for manoeuvre and cover from air, should any attempt to subjugate Poland by the wholesale occupation of Polish territory be made.

13. The detailed methods of defence which Poland might employ in a war against Germany lie outside the scope of this paper, but there is little doubt that Poland would be obliged speedily to evacuate the Corridor, the Poznan salient and the Upper Silesian industrial area. In the first instance, some resistance might be made on the general line of the Vistula from the Grudziadz area to Bydgoszcz, and thence along the rivers Notec and Warta, but such defensive operations would be further endangered by possible German offensives from East Prussia and the Carpathians. Whether the German plan confined itself to limited objectives in Poland or not, the degree of Polish resistance would depend largely on the extent to which German forces were diverted in Czecho-Slovakia and on Germany's western frontier by combined British and French pressure.

14. Poland can expect no British or French naval assistance in the Baltic, at any rate in the early stages of a war, while naval blockade could hardly be a short-term process. Allied ground forces could hardly be expected to offer Poland aid on her own territory, while the Air Attaché has pointed out the disadvantages of direct assistance of air forces operating from Poland. The most Poland could expect in the way of direct assistance would probably be war material, and here the difficulties of communication arise, as has been pointed out above.

15. The rapid steps which Poland is making in war industry require at least another year before their full effect begins to be reflected in the war reserves of the Polish Army, while the disadvantages of Poland's strategic position *vis-à-vis* Germany have been so greatly increased by recent events as gravely to prejudice her chances of offering more than a limited resistance, in present circumstances, to a large-scale German offensive.

E. R. SWORD

Lieutenant-Colonel, Military Attaché

Group Captain Vachell to Sir H. Kennard

WARSAW, April 5, 1939

Value of the Polish Air Force in War

The aim of this memorandum is to give a brief summary of my views of the influence which the Polish air force may be expected to exert in a war in which Poland is attacked by Germany, and France and Great Britain fulfil their recent promises and go to Poland's help.

The Polish air force, as I have previously reported, has been built up on very sound lines and its organisation, training and equipment deserve very high praise in view of the limitations which have been imposed by lack of funds. But this lack of funds has naturally been the cause of a great number of unsatisfactory features, and in conversation with Senior Officers of the Polish air force they have been forced to admit that many of the arrangements would be very different were it not for the limitations of finance.

Although the Polish air force wears a different uniform and enjoys a certain measure of independence, it is in effect merely a branch of the army like the cavalry or artillery. The role of the air force is to assist the army to protect Poland from invasion, and its strength and equipment have been designed for that purpose. Towards the end of last year a certain number of medium bomber aircraft (PZL 37) suitable for the attack of objectives, other than purely military targets in the narrow sense of the word, were manufactured and issued to air force units, and it is possible that this may have been intended to work the first step in a change of note for the air force. But the present strength is not more than 50 of this type and in my view they would at the present time be used to help the army. Thus the value of the Polish air force should at the present be judged solely by its capacity to help the operations of the army, compared with the air forces of greater Powers such as Germany, Great Britain and Russia. Poland is at present at a serious disadvantage in the matter of equipment. The only modern type of aircraft is the PZL 37 bomber referred to above, and all the other types of aircraft must be described as not obsolescent, but obsolete by modern standards, and already overdue for replacement. The fighter (PZL 11) is considerably slower than any type of German aircraft which is likely to be used in war, and must be quite ineffective; the replacement type is now under test at Warsaw and production may start in the course of the next six or nine months. The long reconnaissances, light bomber type (PZL 23) won't prove a very easy victim for the modern German fighter, as must the close reconnaissance type. Replacements of the latter are being manufactured at Lublin; the prototype was on view at the Paris show and has quite a good performance, but it is not expected that the close reconnaissance squadrons will have been re-equipped before the end of the year, if by then.

I was very much impressed on my visit to the factory to-day with the progress which has been made since my last visit to it about six months ago

and with the steps which I was told are being made to develop the Polish air force. Finance for the time being has ceased to be chief limiting factor and the new proposed loan for aircraft and anti-aircraft defence has been received with the greatest enthusiasm. If Poland is allowed 12 months breathing space with the previous financial restrictions removed, I feel that she may make great strides and that her air force, though still greatly inferior to the German one in quantity, and still to some extent inferior in quality, may be expected to play a much more important role than can be expected at present.

In view of Mr. Chamberlain's recent statement in the House that Britain undertakes to help Poland if she is attacked, it is reasonable to ask how can France or Great Britain best help Poland in the air at the present time? As I have stated above I think that the only role which the air force can be expected to perform at present is to help the army to resist the German invasion. The Polish air force equipment is in my opinion inadequate for this purpose compared with the German, but it is probably no less inadequate than the equipment of much in the rest of Poland's armed forces. I should not recommend the immediate re-equipment of Polish air force units with French or British equipment unless all Poland's armed forces are to be similarly re-equipped; in spite of the obsolete quality of much of the Polish equipment, I feel sure that the air force will manage to give as good an account of itself as the majority of the armed forces and that the number of aircraft which Poland possesses is probably adequate to co-operate with the army. It may be that in some respects, such as bombs, machine guns, ammunition or fuel, supplies from France or Great Britain might be available, but I am not at present able to supply this information.

The question then naturally arises whether it might be advisable, if it were possible, to send French or British aircraft to operate against Germany from Poland. This, I feel, must depend on the strategic plan upon which I am not competent to advise without further information and time for study. It depends entirely on the objectives in Germany selected for air attack, and even if they lie closer to the Polish than to the French frontier the difficulty of supply of fuel and bombs might easily make it preferable that the units should be based on France or Great Britain rather than on Poland. If this principle is accepted, I feel that there should be an immediate enquiry into Polish deficiencies. The Polish air force officers have always been very frank with me and have been most willing to supply information, but there has always been a tendency to gloss over their shortcomings and weaknesses; perhaps in the new situation, when they have had time to think it over, they may be induced to change their policy. If Poland is given time, one or two years, the withdrawal of financial limitations, and assistance from France and Great Britain, should make an enormous difference in the efficiency of her air force. The chief necessity is to supply a modern type of engine. The Polish aircraft use engines built under licence from the Bristol Company of Great Britain and as, quite obviously, the most modern design is not made available, the performance of Polish aircraft must always be somewhat

inferior to that of neighbouring Powers such as Germany. My predecessor and I have previously pleaded for permission to be given for Poland to be allowed to produce British engines of more modern design, and in the present circumstances it seems to me that the argument has become even more pressing.

The foregoing paragraph, however, only refers to the long view if Germany allows Poland a year or more before she is put to the test. From the air point of view the next 12 months will find Poland at her weakest; she would have no more than about 600 aircraft, many of which are so inferior in performance as to be no match for the German aircraft by which they would be opposed. The only value of the Polish air force would be to help the army to resist the German invasion, and it seems to me that the army must be forced back and must await relief from French and British pressure in the west or from the inexorable but usually long delayed pressure of naval blockade. It may be advisable to give the Poles immediately certain aeronautical supplies which are urgently required but any large scale reinforcement of Poland would, I think, be ill-advised since the units would be more easily supplied, more secure, and more efficient, if they were left to operate from their own territory.

J. L. VACHELL
Group Captain, Air Attaché

No. 13

Sir W. Seeds (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 6, 1.15 p.m.)
No. 59 Telegraphic [C 4864/54/18]

MOSCOW, April 6, 1939, 2.4 p.m.

Your telegram No. 54.¹

As local press still gives no indication that the Soviet Government have a grievance against His Majesty's Government, I am inclined to hope that Litvinov's attitude reflected temporary annoyance. He cannot indeed properly complain that he was not kept informed. But his *amour-propre* had been wounded. It should be remembered that when he learnt on March 29 of our new course² which would necessarily keep Soviet Union in the background he was still brooding on the significance of an attempt to suppress his harmless communiqué regarding Hudson's mission.³ Soviet Ambassador's statement that his Government had 'no wish to force themselves on anybody' represents politely what Litvinov said to me with greater lack of restraint.

I feel some suggestion by Your Lordship to Soviet Ambassador as to possibility of considering Litvinov's proposal for a conference of sorts would be helpful unless of course it is proposed to invite Soviet Government's views

¹ No. 3.

² See Volume IV of this Series, No. 565.

³ Ibid., Nos. 531, 532 and 545.

or co-operation in some other way as a result of present negotiations with Poland and Roumania.

3. In my telegram Saving No. 13⁴ of yesterday I gave summary of article in 'Journal de Moscou' (Litvinov's mouthpiece) advocating participation by all European peace-loving States in a collective agreement destined to strengthen the security of all such States whether small or great. Friendly comment on this suggestion would undoubtedly be well received.

Repeated to Berlin, Paris, Bucharest and Warsaw.

⁴ Not printed.

No. 14

Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 6, 7.0 p.m.)

No. 243 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 4870/54/18]

BERLIN, April 6, 1939

My telegram No. 242.¹

Herr Hitler has now retired to Berchtesgaden to consider, so I am informed, his future attitude towards Poland. It is possible that he may endeavour to arrange a meeting with Colonel Beck. Before he left Berlin Herr Hitler gave instructions that the Polish question was to be reserved entirely to himself and that the press particularly certain provincial newspapers were for the present to cease attacks on Poland.

Repeated to Warsaw.

¹ Not printed. This telegram of April 6 reported German press comments on M. Beck's visit to London.

No. 15

Viscount Halifax to Sir R. Hoare (Bucharest)

No. 89 Telegraphic [C 5035/15/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, April 6, 1939, 11.30 p.m.

Your telegram No. 102.¹

1. Considerations advanced in Roumanian reply reported in your telegram No. 96² are being sympathetically examined here and have been borne in mind during conversations with the Polish Foreign Minister.

2. Points at issue will be discussed with the Roumanian Minister after his return here as I assume that he will be fully acquainted with the latest views of the Roumanian Government.

¹ No. 9.

² See Volume IV of this Series, No. 603.

RECORD OF CONVERSATIONS¹

Fourth Meeting

[C 5050/54/18]

At a meeting in the Secretary of State's room on the evening of the 6th April the following confidential summary of the conclusions of the conversations was drawn up and approved by the Secretary of State and M. Beck.² The text was checked and initialled as correct by the Polish Ambassador and Sir A. Cadogan on the following day.

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

1. As a result of the conversations held in London on the 4th-6th April, 1939, between the Polish Foreign Minister on the one side and the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs on the other, the Polish Government and His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom record the following conclusions:—

I

2. The Polish Government and His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom have decided to place their collaboration on a permanent basis by the exchange of reciprocal assurances of assistance. They are accordingly prepared to enter into a formal agreement on the following basis:—

- (a) If Germany attacks Poland His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom will at once come to the help of Poland.
- (b) If Germany attempts to undermine the independence of Poland by processes of economic penetration or in any other way, His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom will support Poland in resistance to such attempts. If Germany then attacks Poland, the provisions of paragraph (a) above will apply. In the event of other action by Germany which clearly threatened Polish independence, and was of such a nature that the Polish Government considered it vital to resist it with their national forces, His Majesty's Government would at once come to the help of Poland.
- (c) Reciprocally, Poland gives corresponding assurances to the United Kingdom.
- (d) It is understood that the Polish Government and His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom will keep each other fully and promptly informed of any developments threatening the independence of either country.

¹ See above, Nos. 1, 2, and 10, for a record of the earlier meetings.

² This record does not give the names of any others who may have been present at this meeting.

3. As an earnest of their intention to enter into a formal Agreement to render assistance to Poland in the circumstances contemplated above, His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom have informed the Polish Government, and have stated publicly, that during the period required for the conclusion of the formal Agreement outlined in paragraph 2 above, in the event of any action which clearly threatened Polish independence, and which the Polish Government accordingly considered it vital to resist with their national forces, His Majesty's Government would feel themselves bound at once to lend the Polish Government all the support in their power.

4. The Polish Government, for their part, give His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom a reciprocal undertaking to the same effect, which is, in the same way as the undertaking given by His Majesty's Government, already in force and will remain in force during the period required for the conclusion of the formal agreement outlined in paragraph 2 above.

II

5. The following points remain to be settled before the formal agreement can be concluded:—

- (a) His Majesty's Government desire that the formal agreement should provide that if the United Kingdom and France went to war with Germany to resist German aggression in Western Europe (the Netherlands, Belgium, Switzerland, Denmark), Poland would come to their help. (M. Beck appreciated the vital importance of this question for the United Kingdom, and undertook that the Polish Government would take it into serious consideration.)
- (b) The obligations which His Majesty's Government have accepted towards Poland during the period necessary for the conclusion of the formal Agreement have also been accepted by France. It is understood that the obligations to be accepted by His Majesty's Government in the formal Agreement itself should also be accepted by France; the method of arranging this would be a matter for discussion with the French Government.

III

6. His Majesty's Government wished it to be part of the formal Agreement that Poland should come to the help of Roumania if the latter were the State threatened. The Polish Government, while respecting to the full the obligations of mutual assistance which exist between Poland and Roumania, thought it premature to express a definite opinion as to the desirability of including the case of Roumania in the formal Agreement. They consider that they should treat the matter in the first instance direct with the Roumanian and Hungarian Governments. They will, in the meanwhile, immediately consult with His Majesty's Government should developments in relation to Roumania or Hungary render this desirable.

IV

7. It is understood between the Polish Government and His Majesty's Government that the conclusions recorded above do not preclude either Government from making further agreements with other countries for the purpose of safeguarding their own independence or that of other States.

8. It is the intention of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom for their part—

- (a) To continue the exchanges of views which they have already initiated with the Roumanian Government, with the object of developing collaboration between the United Kingdom, Roumania and other Powers, for the purposes set forth above.
- (b) To initiate exchanges of views for a similar purpose with the Governments of the other members of the Balkan Entente.

9. His Majesty's Government, while realising the difficulties standing in the way of associating the Soviet Government with action such as is contemplated above, are further persuaded of the importance of maintaining the best possible relations with the Soviet Government, whose position in this matter could not be disregarded.

10. The Polish Government for their part declare that, should His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom assume further obligations in Eastern Europe, these obligations would in no way extend the obligations undertaken by Poland.

11. The Polish Government emphasise the importance, in the consideration of any attempt to develop collaboration, of taking into account the position of the Eastern Baltic States.

No. 17

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)

No. 834 [C 4882/15/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 6, 1939*

Sir,

The French Ambassador asked to see me this morning, and began by telling me of the deep impression that had been made in France by the recent declaration of His Majesty's Government in regard to Poland.¹ He told me that both M. Daladier and M. Bonnet wished the Prime Minister to know how valuable they thought the action taken had been.

2. They had been particularly impressed by the language used by the Prime Minister concerning the necessity of bending all our energies to strengthen the purpose to which we had set our hands. M. Corbin understood that conversations which had been proceeding between the several experts of the defence departments during the last week or two had been

¹ On March 31. See Volume IV of this Series, No. 582.

proceeding in a spirit of cordiality and close co-operation, and his Government attached the greatest value to them. At the same time, he was instructed to point out that they viewed with very considerable apprehension the long delay that must ensue before substantial land forces would be available to co-operate with the French army. He very well understood all the economic, technical, financial and, it may be, political difficulties that were involved. The French Government also had had their difficulties, principally in the industrial field, and their experience in surmounting obstacles to a return from a standard 40-hour week to a week of 55, 58 or even 60 hours, showed that many things that seem insurmountable could, in fact, be overcome. He pressed the point very strongly.

3. I told His Excellency that we were very well aware both of the difficulties and of their effects, and that we had had the matter under very constant review. I could assure him that we all recognised the weight that must attach to the point that he had raised, but that acceleration of the timetable was, as he recognised, a matter of extreme difficulty. I was not technically equipped to discuss the many questions involved, but I assured the Ambassador that I would lose no time in placing what he had said on behalf of his Government before the Prime Minister and my colleagues. My Government, as also the French Government, had only one wish, which was to make the most effective contribution that we each could to our common effort.

4. Meanwhile, I had no doubt that the general problem which he had raised must be taken into consideration in the course of the Staff Conversations now in progress.

5. From this, M. Corbin turned to ask me whether I could tell him anything of the progress of our conversations with Poland. To this I gave him a fairly full indication of what had passed and of the situation as it was left by the Prime Minister's statement in the House of Commons to-day.² I told him that we should naturally be sending a full report to the French Government.

6. Before he left M. Corbin said there were two other matters on which he would be glad to know if I had any information additional to that in the possession of the French Government. The first was Albania. There the situation seemed confused. Information from Greek quarters suggested that Greek opinion was a good deal disturbed, while, on the other hand, Yugoslavia seemed comparatively unconcerned and quiet. In Rome the matter was treated as if all the rumours in circulation were rumours without foundation, and the general impression left upon M. Corbin's mind was one of considerable disquiet. I told him that our information was also incomplete and to a great extent conflicting, but that I found it difficult to avoid the conclusion that there was, in fact, some ground for the Greek anxiety. It was impossible to predict, however, in what form these events might take shape and, as at present advised, I did not readily see what further action we could usefully take.³

² See Parl. Deb., 5th ser., H. of C., vol. 345, cols. 2996-9.

³ See Chapter II.

7. The other subject to which M. Corbin referred was Spain, on which he had nothing very satisfactory to report. The French Government had not been able to make any bargain over the return of the Spanish ships in connexion with the refugees, who were still only being very slowly returned.

8. I asked M. Corbin, finally, whether he had anything to report in regard to the possibility of any resumption of contact between the French and Italian Governments concerning Italian claims. I told him that I had had some indication that, if the French Government were willing, the Italian Government would be prepared to enter into conversations on these matters. I had not yet had the opportunity of forming any final judgment as to the value of this information, but, if it seemed to hold out any prospects of useful development, we should, of course, place the French Government in possession of it.

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

No. 18

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw)

No. 183 [C 4665/54/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 6, 1939*

Sir,

The Polish Ambassador called on the 1st April to discuss the statement made on the 31st March by the Prime Minister.¹ While warmly welcoming the declaration, he suggested that it was so worded as to give, perhaps, a wrong impression to those who wished to minimise its importance, and he was distressed to notice that the Beaverbrook press, and to a lesser extent 'The Times', were developing this line of argument.

2. His Excellency feared that in these circumstances paragraph 2 of the Prime Minister's statement might be so distorted as actually to weaken and undermine the position of the Polish Government *vis-à-vis* of [*sic*] Germany. It seemed to suggest that there were large and urgent questions in dispute between the two countries and that immediate negotiations were necessary and desirable in order that they should be settled. Herr Hitler, if he were cunning enough, might seize upon this implication in order to demand negotiations and to put forward his maximum demands in regard both to Danzig and the Corridor, not to mention Upper Silesia. Thus, the Prime Minister's declaration might weaken the Polish Government's position in their dealings with the German Government, should the latter take up this position.

3. As a matter of fact, there were no important questions in dispute between Germany and Poland, and the arrangements for German transit across the Corridor were working smoothly, as they always had worked. It is true that the breakdown in the authority of the League of Nations had

¹ See Volume IV of this Series, No. 582.

raised the question of the withdrawal of the League High Commissioner in Danzig and the institution of some other system for ensuring the maintenance of the Free State. But if Germany really intended to show goodwill and to continue her relations with Poland on the basis of the 1934 Agreement, there were only minor questions outstanding between the two countries, which could be settled without any difficulty whatever. (In the case of Danzig, for instance, it had been understood between the German and Polish Governments at the time of the 1934 Agreement that the affairs of Danzig should never be allowed to interrupt the good relations between the two countries.)

4. Count Raczynski was questioned as to whether there had been any recent negotiations with Germany, and His Excellency gave an assurance that there had been none. The German Government had never put forward any definite complaints or demands, either as regards the Corridor or Danzig. The most that could be said was that there had been occasional feelers; for instance, during the Berchtesgaden meeting between Herr Hitler and Colonel Beck² the former had, while expressing satisfaction at the excellent relations between Poland and Germany, quite incidentally remarked that perhaps some sort of special transit rights might be given to Germany. Again, as regards Danzig, although Colonel Beck had realised that this matter would have to be tackled if and when the High Commissioner was withdrawn, no opportunity for doing so had, as far as the Ambassador knew, yet occurred.

5. Count Raczynski hoped, therefore, that we would do what we could to make the press realise that the cure for the international problem in Eastern Europe was not to be found in immediate negotiations between Germany and Poland, and that no such negotiations were at present in prospect; nor, indeed, could they take place on the basis of the sweeping claims which some papers had attributed (wrongly) to Germany.

6. His Excellency was assured that paragraph 2 of the Prime Minister's declaration contained no ulterior significance; on the contrary, its object was merely to lead up to a denunciation of the German practice of enforcing their demands under threat of force instead of by free negotiation. The declaration contained, indeed, no reservation, and it was not the intention of His Majesty's Government to force, or even to urge, the Polish Government to enter into negotiations with the German Government if they did not think this necessary or opportune. All His Majesty's Government asked was that, if such negotiations should take place, then they should be kept fully informed of their nature and progress.³

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

² On January 5, 1939. See Volume III of this Series, Chapter IX.

³ A summary of this conversation was telegraphed to Sir H. Kennard on April 2. See Volume IV of this Series, No. 598.

No. 19

Viscount Halifax to Sir W. Seeds (Moscow)

No. 255 [C 4884/54/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, April 6, 1939

Sir,

I asked the Soviet Ambassador to call on me to-day in order that I might tell him the general lines on which our conversations had proceeded with Colonel Beck.

2. I showed him the statement that the Prime Minister had just made in the House of Commons¹ and M. Maisky read this with attention.

3. I told him that I did not suppose the statement would contain any great surprises for him, for he knew already the hesitation that Poland felt at being openly associated with the Soviet and the reasons for that attitude. He might think that the arrangement now announced was of more limited scope than he expected, and that it amounted to little more than a bilateral Anglo-Polish agreement; but he would observe that the last paragraph of the statement expressly contemplated other agreements being reached with other Governments, and the intention of the paragraph had been particularly to cover the position of the Roumanian Government and also of the Soviet Government.

4. M. Maisky began by asking me whether it would be contemplated that this arrangement should be developed by Staff conversations. To this I replied that such Staff conversations were certainly not excluded and it might well be that they might be found convenient. But, so far as I remembered, the statement had not been designed to have explicit reference to such developments.

5. M. Maisky examined me with inquisitorial persistence about the precise meaning of the words 'direct' or 'indirect' in paragraph 4.² Supposing Germany invaded Lithuania and Poland thought it necessary to join in on the ground that it was a threat to her independence, should we also be involved? I said that I fully recognised the reality of the question involved, but it was exactly the same question that might arise in many other cases, e.g., a similar situation might arise in regard to Denmark in which we might feel that a threat was made to our independence. These were precisely the questions on which it was vital to be clear, and on which, no doubt, the Polish Government and we should have further discussions. It was not only, as he would realise, a geographical matter, but there were also many things to be considered arising out of the wide variety of method by which this situation might be created.

¹ See Parl. Deb., 5th ser., H. of C., vol. 345, cols. 2996-9.

² The reference is evidently to paragraph 3 of the Parliamentary statement, the first sentence of which reads: 'Like the temporary assurance, the permanent agreement would not be directed against any other country, but would be designed to assure Great Britain and Poland of mutual assistance in the event of any threat, direct or indirect, to the independence of either.'

6. M. Maisky had a good deal to say about whether this was an honest attempt at collective security and whether we did, in fact, propose to treat Poland and Roumania on identical terms, and several other kindred points. As to the first, I told him that it was obviously necessary to pursue investigations and consultations further before anyone could say finally what might be possible in the way of an association of States for the purpose we had in mind. On the second point I told him that, while Poland and Roumania certainly had interests that appeared to us to be very much in common, it had always seemed difficult to us to treat the two States exactly on all fours, if only for the reason that the differences between them in material and military resources was so considerable.

7. After a process of cross-questioning that seemed likely to be interminable, M. Maisky took his leave, giving me as he left a warning against the possible unreliability of Polish policy. I told him that I supposed that we must both recognise the difficulty of the position of Poland and that I hoped to keep him closely informed as our discussions proceeded further and trusted that meanwhile I might feel that his Government would look benevolently on what we were trying to do. The Ambassador's general attitude was friendly, but his ingenuity in the formulation and examination of hypothetical problems is unrivalled.

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

No. 20

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 7, 1.5 p.m.)

No. 146 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 4887/13/18]

PARIS, April 7, 1939

Political Director states that indication has been received from the *single* source¹ that German mechanised divisions are being moved from Czecho-Slovakia and that a sudden attack on French front will take place tonight. Political Director emphasises extremely secret character of this communication.

The French have indications from other sources of German and Italian troop movements to Yugoslav frontier. Italian naval reservists have been recalled and preparations in Libya point to attack on Egypt and Tunisia.

¹ This should perhaps read: 'a single source'; see Nos. 21 and 22.

No. 21

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 7, 1.40 p.m.)
No. 148 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 4888/13/18]

PARIS, April 7, 1939

My telegram No. 146.¹

Assistant Military Attaché has just spoken on above to General Gamelin's Aide-de-Camp who confirmed that report regarding attack on France to-night only came from a single source which was Swiss. He did not think Swiss sources generally very reliable.

Naval Attaché found nobody at the Ministry of Marine, but will see someone in authority at 2.30.

I am seeing M. Bonnet at 3.30.

¹ No. 20.

No. 22

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 7, 5.0 p.m.)
No. 150 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 4889/13/18]

PARIS, April 7, 1939

My telegram No. 148.¹

Minister for Foreign Affairs tells me this report came from an informant in Prague, who told French Military Attaché there.

M. Bonnet does not attach much importance to it. He feels, although we must of course be vigilant, we must bear in mind the possibility of all these reports being circulated by Germans in order to play on our nerves. For instance there was also a report (this evening from a *Swiss* source) that an attack was to be made on Poland yesterday.

¹ No. 21.

No. 23

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 7, 6.30 p.m.)
No. 151 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 4890/13/18]

PARIS, April 7, 1939

My immediately preceding telegram.¹

Ministry of Marine have no information of any particular instructions to German shipping and German sailings appear to be normal up to now. This might support theory that no immediate attack is contemplated or, equally, that reliance is placed on success of a knock-out blow.

Head of Deuxième Bureau at Air Ministry attributes report to fact that remaining eight mechanised divisions left Prague this morning for an unknown destination. (3 divisions had already left, part of them, he thought,

¹ No. 22.

for Yugoslav frontier). He does not regard possibility of an imminent attack on France seriously and thinks informant may have deduced too much from this movement. He hopes to know direction of movement tonight.

Assistant Military Attaché was informed by Colonel Gauché that indications from Germany are contradictory but they consider that we must be prepared to see early German action in Danzig and the Corridor and Germany in connexion with Italian action based on Albania against Yugoslavia and/or Greece. Italian regular troops have been disembarking recently in Cadiz, the main objective being, he suggested, Gibraltar.

No. 24

Viscount Halifax to His Majesty's Representatives at Warsaw, Washington, Paris, Berlin, Rome, Tokyo, Budapest, Sofia, Angora, Moscow, Bucharest, Belgrade, Athens, Cairo.

No. 78¹ Telegraphic [C 5063/54/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, April 7, 1939, 7.0 p.m.

(*To all*).

My immediately following telegram² contains a summary of the conclusions reached during the conversations in London with the Polish Foreign Minister. This summary has been drawn up in agreement with Colonel Beck. It is a confidential document and its existence is not being made public.

(*Washington only*).

Please give a copy to the State Department for the confidential information of the President.

(*Paris only*).

You should inform the Minister for Foreign Affairs orally of the conclusions reached allowing him to take notes if he wishes, but you should *not* leave a copy with him. It has been agreed with Colonel Beck that conclusions should be kept confidential in so far as they have not been officially made public and I am unwilling to run risk of leakage by giving French Government a written document.

(*Berlin, Rome, Tokyo, Budapest, Sofia only*).

It is being sent to you for your own confidential information only.

(*Angora, Moscow, Bucharest, Belgrade, Athens only*).

It is being sent to you for your general guidance and *not* for communication to the Government to which you are accredited.

¹ No. 78 to Warsaw, No. 167 to Washington, No. 130 to Paris, No. 35 Saving to Berlin, No. 43 Saving to Rome, No. 178 to Tokyo, No. 9 Saving to Budapest, No. 14 Saving to Sofia, No. 70 to Angora, No. 8 Saving to Moscow, No. 22 Saving to Bucharest, No. 14 Saving to Belgrade, No. 18 Saving to Athens, No. 278 to Cairo.

² Not printed. For the summary of conclusions, see No. 16.

Information contained in it will enable you to speak on the right lines in any conversation you may have, but you should avoid being drawn into giving any details of it.

(Cairo only).

You may, in strict confidence, inform Prime Minister in general terms of the conclusions reached.

No. 25

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora)

No. 76 Telegraphic [C 5052/54/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 7, 1939, 10.0 p.m.*

1. Turkish Ambassador called by invitation today in order to be kept in touch with what had passed with Polish Foreign Minister.

2. He was of course aware from the Prime Minister's declaration¹ that M. Beck had given a reciprocal provisional guarantee corresponding with that which we had already given to the Polish Government. He was informed that the two Governments had agreed in principle to the negotiation of a more permanent arrangement, and were agreed generally on the principles on which it should be based. There were certain matters which still remained to be discussed, and it would be necessary to get in touch with the French Government, since if the agreement was to be on the lines that we contemplated it would probably involve some extension of France's existing obligations to Poland, and vice versa. But it was hoped that this would not take very long.

3. We had of course discussed the position of Roumania, but M. Beck had explained that as Poland was an ally of Roumania this matter should be discussed in the first instance direct between Warsaw and Bucharest, and to this we had agreed.

4. It was important that our two Governments should keep in touch and we hoped that when the arrangements with Poland and Roumania were complete we should be able to discuss with the Turkish and Greek Governments the manner in which they might be disposed to co-operate.

5. The Ambassador expressed thanks for this information. He said that the Roumanian Ambassador in Angora had already informed the Turkish Government of the proposals put forward in Bucharest by the French Government and His Majesty's Government.² The Roumanian Ambassador had said that it would greatly strengthen the position of Roumania if she could be assured of Turkish and Greek assistance. The Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs had replied that he would study this suggestion with all the sympathy that was warranted by the relations between Turkey and Roumania and the friendship between Turkey and Great Britain. In any event

¹ See Parl. Deb., 5th ser., H. of C., vol. 345, cols. 2996-9.

² See Volume IV of this Series, No. 538.

the Turkish Government were determined to carry out their obligations as a member of the Balkan Entente.³

6. The Ambassador said it was important that Your Excellency should be fully informed of the policy of His Majesty's Government in order to discuss matters with the Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs. He was assured that we were doing this and that you would be able to have a frank exchange of views with the Minister.

Repeated to Warsaw, Moscow, Bucharest, Belgrade, Athens and Paris.

³ The Balkan Pact is printed in *British and Foreign State Papers*, Vol. 137, p. 496.

No. 26

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 10)

No. 34 Saving: Telegraphic [C 5056/54/18]

WARSAW, April 7, 1939

The German Ambassador came to see me today before proceeding on leave. He told me he was to see Herr von Ribbentrop next week and wondered what he could say to him about the future relations between Germany and Poland in view of the result of Colonel Beck's conversations in London. During his many years here he had made every endeavour to secure a lasting agreement with Poland. He now feared that Poland would be encouraged to resist all German demands whether they were in regard to Danzig or minority questions. He had for instance been pressing for an early resumption of discussions regarding minority questions but Poles were now adopting a stiffer attitude and demanding in the first instance a settlement of question of Polish school at Ratibor.

I pointed out that understanding between Poland and Great Britain had been received here very soberly and without any provocative demonstrations either among the people or in the press. I did not think Colonel Beck would be so foolish as to adopt an unreasonable tone in any future negotiations with German Government owing to understanding with Great Britain. I hoped that he would at any rate emphasize in his conversations at Berlin that there had been no signs of provocative attitude here as result of recent developments.

I also drew his attention to ridiculous attacks on my Military Attaché in German press (see Berlin telegram No. 11 Saving¹). He told me that as a result of a conversation between Colonel Sword and German Military Attaché he had already written to Berlin on the subject and he himself regretted that such attacks should have been made.

Repeated to Berlin.

¹ The reference is to Berlin telegram No. 209 of March 31 which was repeated to Warsaw as telegram No. 11 Saving. It reported an article in the 'Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung' alleging that H.M. Military Attaché in Warsaw was responsible for reports of German troop movements near the Polish frontier.

Sir G. Knox (Budapest) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 14)

No. 47 [C 5188/71/21]

BUDAPEST, April 7, 1939

My Lord,

On the 14th March the Hungarian army invaded Ruthenia,¹ and three days later accomplished one of this country's major ambitions, the establishment of a common frontier with Poland. Disappointment at Hungary's failure to attain this object during the peripheral partition of Czecho-Slovakia in October and November of last year, and resentment of Germany's sudden veto, when she had been about to jump the claim, had been kept alive and every resource of propaganda and intrigue was used to make the position of the Ruthenian Government untenable and to keep the country ripe for Hungarian intervention whenever a suitable occasion might offer.

2. This occurred with the first step in the final stage of the disruption of Czecho-Slovakia—the movement for 'Slovak Independence'. Hungary was determined this time not to let the opportunity slip and acted with great promptness. Already in the early morning of the 14th March, several hours before the Slovak Parliament had proclaimed independence, an incident had occurred on the Ruthenian frontier which was too providential, perhaps, to have been entirely fortuitous. The local Hungarian commander acting in conformity with an official warning that had been made to the Czech Government in January repelled the 'aggression' and following up vigorously penetrated into Ruthenian territory and occupied a village.

3. At luncheon on the same day the Hungarian Director of Military Intelligence informed me that Hungary was decided to march into Ruthenia without delay and to put Germany before a *fait accompli*. At 3 p.m., when news of the Slovak declaration of independence was known, the Hungarian Government addressed a twelve-hour ultimatum to the Czecho-Slovak Government demanding the liberation of interned Hungarians, the granting to Hungarians the right to organise themselves and the issue of weapons to Hungarian defence organisations. The Czech troops were to be withdrawn from Ruthenia within twenty-four hours, and the property of 'Hungarian citizens and members of the Hungarian nation' was to be respected. The reply of the Czecho-Slovak Government was regarded as unsatisfactory, but in any case the Hungarians had made up their minds and their troops were already in movement.

4. The Hungarian army met with a little sporadic resistance, principally from Ukrainian 'Sitch' bands, organised in recent months as a counterpoise to the Hungarian 'comitadjis' who had been passed over the frontier in order to keep the Ruthenian question alive. The opposition, however, such as it was, and the difficulties of the terrain, increased by unfavourable weather, were rapidly overcome and the occupation was completed by the 18th March.

¹ See Volume IV of this Series, No. 252.

5. On the political side Hungary took little trouble to justify her seizure of Ruthenia. For her own public opinion it was enough that this area had formed part of the Kingdom of St. Stephen, while, for the outside world, Hungary's action was overshadowed by the enormity of Germany's proceedings in Czecho-Slovakia, which had made it possible. The Prime Minister, when announcing in Parliament on the 16th March the reincorporation of Ruthenia in Hungary 'with its autonomy that is founded on ancient rights,' justified Hungary's action by the growing anarchy in Ruthenia—which, incidentally, had been created in large part by Hungarian propaganda and armed bands—and by a request said to have been received 'from the Ruthenian people and their leaders' that the Hungarian army would restore the safety of life and property by occupying the country. This statement referred to an appeal which had been published in the Hungarian press and purported to emanate from a self-styled Ruthenian National Council. The only signatories to this document that it was possible to identify were Ruthenians living in the territories which had been reincorporated in Hungary in November.

6. There was at first some doubt as to how far Germany approved of Hungary's action against Ruthenia, which she had firmly opposed four months before. On the 14th March both the Secretary-General of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Director of Military Intelligence informed me that Germany had not been consulted, but three days later my German colleague told me that Germany, in the new situation that had arisen through Slovakia's declaration of independence, had expressed to Hungary her 'désintéressement' in Ruthenia. He gave me to understand that Germany's principal object in this was to set at rest Poland's suspicions of German designs in the Ukraine. What will be the cost to Hungary of this 'désintéressement' has not yet emerged.

7. The results of Hungary's seizure of Ruthenia, except in so far as they touch the question of her relations with Roumania, with which I have dealt in a separate despatch,² do not appear important, but the manner of it shows that Hungary has learned her lesson from the Axis Powers, and that her policy in the future, if and when occasion offers, will be one of 'smash and grab'. To the attainment of a common frontier with Poland I attribute as little strategic and political value today as I have at all times, since the 'Anschluss' made manifest Hungary's impotence in the face of German pressure.

8. For the territory itself some advantage will no doubt ensue from reunion with its natural economic hinterland, by which the inhabitants will be able to find again a certain amount of seasonal employment in the Hungarian plains and to float their timber down the rivers without passports, quota and Customs hindrances. On the other hand it is probable that they will lose whatever they had gained under the Czecho-Slovak régime in the way of social services and public works, since I understand from those members of the staff of His Majesty's Legation who have visited Ruthenia in recent years that the scanty works of utility or amenity which bear witness to any attempt

² No. 28.

to raise the country out of a mediæval pauperdom are the fruit of twenty years of Czecho-Slovak government.

9. Hungary, by the acquisition of considerable supplies of timber and salt, and by the recovered control of the upper waters of the Theiss and its tributaries, will probably be able to compensate herself for the incorporation of more than half a million of one of the poorest and most backward populations in Europe. Much play is made in official statements and the press with the mineral wealth of Ruthenia, but it is not explained how this had hitherto lain unexploited through a thousand years of Magyar rule.

10. I am sending copies of this despatch to His Majesty's Representatives at Warsaw and Bucharest.

I have, &c.,
G. G. KNOX

No. 28

Sir G. Knox (Budapest) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 18)

No. 48 [C 5434/3356/18]

BUDAPEST, *April 7, 1939*

My Lord,

The occupation of Ruthenia by Hungarian troops, on which I had the honour to report in my despatch No. 47¹ of the 7th April, brought about a delicate situation between Hungary and Roumania. The south-east corner of Ruthenia contains some 14,000 inhabitants of Roumanian race and is traversed by one of the two railway lines connecting Roumania with her ally, Poland. This was a matter of little importance so long as Ruthenia was controlled by another ally of Roumania, but acquired a different significance when that area fell into Hungarian hands.

2. A still more serious consideration was that the Hungarian occupation of Ruthenia extended Roumania's frontier with this country and turned her existing flank to a depth of some 80 miles. It was inevitable that, to meet this new situation, concentrations and movements of troops should have taken place in Roumania and that the scale of these movements should have been inspired by the none too satisfactory relations existing between the two countries as well as by a reported massing of German troops towards Hungary's frontier.

3. Meanwhile, the Hungarian Government, in order to profit immediately by the confused situation arising out of Slovakia's declaration of independence, had begun the invasion of Ruthenia with the troops stationed on the frontier which were ready to their hand. These consisted in large part of raw recruits who had been called up at the beginning of the year. Though no serious resistance was to be expected, the operation in itself was arduous owing to the difficult and inhospitable nature of the terrain and the very bad climatic conditions which prevailed. Thus, from the first moment, the

¹ No. 27.

Hungarians were obliged to reinforce their frontier forces with more seasoned troops. Indeed, even before Slovakia's independence had been proclaimed the Hungarian Director of Military Intelligence told me that reservists were being quietly called up for this purpose.

4. Both countries had thus at the outset compelling grounds for taking military precautions once that the Hungarian invasion of Ruthenia had been set in motion. Unfortunately, in the atmosphere of suspicion arising from Hungary's revisionist claims against Roumania and from reports of the presence of strong German forces in Slovakia which bred the fear that Hungary was acting as Germany's catpaw, these precautions could not be confined to Ruthenia and the neighbouring districts of Roumania, but were extended all along the Hungaro-Roumanian frontier, thus greatly increasing the possibilities of a clash between the two armies. Whether the mobilisation of the Debrecen Army Corps was undertaken in response to Roumanian military measures or at Germany's behest is, for the present, an open question.

5. Whilst the military situation was thus developing, a somewhat confused dispute had arisen on the territorial question of Ruthenia. The Minister for Foreign Affairs told me on the 20th March that the Roumanians had in the first instance asked for the half of Ruthenia and then reduced their request to one for the extreme eastern corner. For some reason, which he did not make clear, Count Csaky found this manner of dealing suspicious. My Roumanian colleague's explanation of it, which corresponded in many respects with that given in Sir R. Hoare's telegram No. 65² of the 22nd March, was as follows:—

6. During the Roumanian Minister for Foreign Affairs' visit to Warsaw, M. Beck had reverted to the question of a Hungaro-Roumanian partition of Ruthenia, which he had unsuccessfully raised at Galatz a few months before, and informed M. Gafencu that Hungary would be willing, if she recovered Ruthenia, to leave the south-east corner of the territory to Roumania. When Hungarian troops entered Ruthenia, the Polish Government suggested that the Roumanians should do the same; they, however, replied that they would only do so if Poland were willing to act simultaneously, and suggested that, in that case, the Poles should occupy a line running due south from their frontier to Huszt, so that their troops should form a screen between the Hungarian and Roumanian forces. It was with this operation in mind that M. Bossy was instructed to inform the Hungarian Government that Roumania would greatly appreciate it if the Hungarians would not occupy that part of Ruthenia lying east of a line drawn north from Huszt pending negotiations on the subject of Roumanian interests in Ruthenia. Since the Polish Government were unwilling to fall in with the Roumanian suggestion M. Bossy was instructed to make his second request that the Hungarian army should refrain from occupying the south-east corner of Ruthenia. M. Bossy informed me that in his conversations with the Hungarian Government he put forward no territorial claim; this has since been confirmed to me by the Secretary-General of the Hungarian Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

² Not printed.

7. The result of the Roumanian Minister's second *démarche* was that he was informed that 'for technical reasons' the advance of the Hungarian army could not be arrested, but that once the occupation of Ruthenia was complete the Hungarian Government would be ready to discuss with Roumania any questions arising there. This reply will, presumably, have closed the territorial question, since it seems evident that Roumania, who, on her own admission, has a minority of 600,000 Hungarians, is hardly in a position to claim a part of the former Kingdom of Hungary on the ground that it contains 14,000 Roumanian nationals. It would seem that, on this occasion, Count Csaky has stolen a march on my Roumanian colleague, who had allowed himself to be charmed by a new tone of friendliness which had been used towards him in conversation and in one or two articles in the inspired press.

8. From the 20th March onwards my French and Polish colleagues and I represented frequently to the Hungarian Government the importance which our Governments attached to the avoidance of any incident between the Hungarian and Roumanian troops. The Minister for Foreign Affairs, while disclaiming emphatically any intention of attacking Roumania, did not at first succeed in dismissing all suspicions in regard to Hungarian intentions from our minds and, in spite of official denials, the partial mobilisation of the Hungarian army continued.

9. On the 23rd March, however, I found that my Polish and Roumanian colleagues shared my view that, with the announcement of the signature of the German-Roumanian Commercial Agreement, the danger of any conflict between Hungary and Roumania had greatly diminished, since, whether the Hungarian military measures were inspired by Germany or not, it was highly improbable that Hungary would venture to launch an attack on Roumania without Germany's encouragement—an encouragement that was unlikely to be forthcoming on the morrow of the signature of so favourable an agreement.

10. Thenceforward it remained to find a formula which would allow demobilisation without loss of face, and on the 25th March the Hungarian Minister for Foreign Affairs handed to the Roumanian Minister a Note which, after declaring that Hungary would respect her new frontier with Roumania as she had respected the old, added that the Hungarian Government would revoke the military measures they had recently taken twenty-four hours after the Roumanians had begun to do the same. As the Roumanian Minister was taking his leave Count Csaky said that he would arrange with the Hungarian General Staff to begin demobilisation at once. While this comedy was being enacted in the Minister's room, my German colleague was telling the Roumanian Counsellor in the ante-room that his Government had advised the Hungarian Government to demobilise without delay. On the morning of the 27th March demobilisation began on both sides.

11. I understand from my Roumanian colleague that his Government attach some importance to obtaining a public declaration of non-aggression from the Hungarian Government. That contained in the Note of the 25th

March to the effect that Hungary would respect the new frontier as she had respected the old seems hardly fitted to give entire satisfaction. While it is true that, on the material side, Hungary has hitherto not attacked that frontier, it must at the same time be admitted that she has not up to now possessed either the military force or the possibilities of military alliance necessary for such an adventure; whereas, on the moral side, her 'respect' has been shown for the past twenty years by a daily denunciation of this frontier as a crime against God and man.

12. There is at present some desultory negotiation in progress regarding the putting into force of the Gentlemen's Agreement reached last summer at Bled (Mr. Gascoigne's despatch No. 146 of the 25th August, 1938³), but the Hungarian Government appear to be firmly opposed to this. I do not, myself, attach much importance to these conversations, since I believe that in this part of Europe, at least, the time is past when platonic assurances of this nature could have any positive value except between Powers whose vital interests would coincide to the point of ensuring their fulfilment. This is not the case between Hungary and Roumania, nor is it likely to be so in the visible future. The relations of the two countries will, no doubt, be dictated by Germany's designs and above all by the outcome of the negotiations now proceeding for a British guarantee of Roumania's independence.

13. I am sending copies of this despatch to His Majesty's Representatives at Bucharest, Warsaw and Berlin.

I have, &c.,

G. G. KNOX

³ Not printed. The reference is to the provisional Agreements between Hungary and the countries of the Little Entente, initialled at Bled on August 23, 1938, mutually renouncing all recourse to force in the settlement of disputes and recognising Hungary's right to equality in armaments. The signature and execution of the Agreements were to be contingent on the conclusion of Agreements on minorities; these were reached between Hungary, Roumania and Yugoslavia, but not between Hungary and Czechoslovakia.

No. 29

Sir R. Hoare (Bucharest) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 8, 8.8 a.m.)
No. 105 Telegraphic [C 4920/15/18]

BUCHAREST, April 8, 1939, 2.50 a.m.

Minister for Foreign Affairs, who has had no information from Warsaw or London beyond the Prime Minister's statement yesterday regarding Anglo-Roumanian [*sic*] conversation,¹ is disturbed by various statements especially in Berlin press which have been used by Hungarian press with the exception of [*? Pester*] Lloyd to advance territorial claims.

¹ This should presumably read 'Anglo-Polish conversation'. The reference is to Mr. Chamberlain's statement of April 6. See Parl. Deb., 5th ser., H. of C., vol. 345, cols. 2996-9.

Bearing in mind 'Times' leading article of September 7² suggesting possibility of territorial concessions by Czecho-Slovakia he is unpleasantly impressed as regards these leading articles of April 1 which make definite distinction in the case of Poland between the independence and territorial integrity. So far as Roumania is concerned opinion of the Government is that no distinction can be made. I said that I did not believe, basing myself on your original proposals, that His Majesty's Government intended to hint at any distinction but that their purpose simply was to establish the fact that for the future negotiations must be conducted in a normal manner.

I quoted your telegram No. 89³ and said that it would hardly have been possible to make progress with regard to Roumania until we knew how matters stood with Poland.

Anxieties of Roumanian Government are increased by report that has reached them from Paris to the effect that having regard to Polish 'Alliance' with Hungary, Polish Minister for Foreign Affairs has refused to assist Roumania in resisting Hungarian attack.

² See Volume II of this Series, No. 808, note 1.

³ No. 15.

No. 30

Viscount Halifax to Sir R. Hoare (Bucharest)

No. 93 Telegraphic [C 5038/54/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, April 8, 1939, 11.50 a.m.

The Roumanian Minister questioned Sir A. Cadogan this afternoon¹ in regard to our conversations with Polish Foreign Minister.

2. He asked what would be the nature of our assistance to Poland. He was told that if our guarantee came into operation we should naturally give full assistance by all possible means.

3. He asked how our guarantee would be brought into operation. M. Beck had expressed to him his satisfaction that the guarantee would be brought into operation by a unilateral decision by the Polish Government to resist a threat to Poland's independence. Sir A. Cadogan replied that our position was made clear by the Prime Minister's declaration. If Poland were faced with a direct attack or with demands which she felt would be inconsistent with her independence, and if she decided to resist attack or pressure with her national forces, we should then come to her assistance.

4. He said he asked M. Beck whether the guarantee was of Polish independence or integrity. M. Beck seems to have replied that the operation of the guarantee would depend on a unilateral decision by the Polish Government, and that in that sense the guarantee of independence covered more than a guarantee of integrity. The Minister asked Sir A. Cadogan whether

¹ This telegram was drafted on April 7.

there were any exceptions or reservations to our guarantee, and he was told that there was none. The Minister said that M. Beck had promised to enter at once into negotiations with the Roumanian Ambassador at Warsaw and expressed the hope that the matter might be satisfactorily settled in one or two days. M. Beck informed him of the letter which he had received from the Hungarian Minister in London (which we saw last night)² to the effect that the Hungarian Government hoped for a definite understanding with the Roumanian Government. M. Tilea had then asked M. Beck to encourage Hungary to join the Franco-British-Polish-Roumanian arrangement, and he represented M. Beck as having replied that that was his intention. Sir A. Cadogan felt bound to observe to M. Tilea that he could say nothing on that point at the moment. If Hungary were included in the arrangement, that would imply a British guarantee of Hungary, and he could not at present say that we were prepared to contemplate that.

5. M. Tilea then asked whether it would be a condition of our guarantee to Roumania that Poland should also guarantee Roumania. M. Tilea was referred to the proposals put forward in Bucharest,³ from which it was clear that that was the case.

6. He then said that in the event of trouble Roumania must be assured against a possible Bulgarian attack, and suggested that if Roumania entered into a too close association with Poland the support of her partners in the Balkan Entente might be weakened. Sir A. Cadogan hoped that this might not be the case and said that we were keeping in close touch with the Greek and Turkish Governments and hoped to enlist their support.

7. M. Tilea reverted to the employment of the word 'independence' as distinct from 'integrity'. It was explained to him that on one view the former might be held to cover the latter, but he said that he would like to address us a Note asking for an exact definition of what we understood by the expression 'independence'.

8. He enquired whether the guarantee to Roumania would apply against all countries, i.e. against Soviet Russia, as well as Germany. He was told that we had never considered the question of guaranteeing either Poland or Roumania against Soviet Russia, and that M. Beck had made no request for such a guarantee.

9. M. Tilea said that he understood that the first step was for Roumania to reach complete agreement with Poland. Sir A. Cadogan agreed. The Minister said that when that had been done and we had completed our agreement with Roumania, his Government would then wish to discuss the question of a loan.

Repeated to Warsaw and Paris.

² No copy of this letter appears to exist in the Foreign Office archives. On April 6 the Hungarian Minister had communicated to the Foreign Office the text of the Note from the Hungarian Minister for Foreign Affairs to the Roumanian Minister in Budapest, summarized in No. 28, paragraph 10.

³ See Volume IV of this Series, No. 538.

No. 31

Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 8, 12.0 noon)

No. 252 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 4904/13/18]

BERLIN, April 8, 1939

My telegram No. 229.¹

Polish Military Attaché called on Military Attaché late last night with information from good source in German War Office that state of 'Marschbereitschaft'² was ordered throughout German army yesterday. This may (or may not) be nothing more than precautionary measure in view of events in Albania.³ Twenty-third Division has left Berlin and units have been identified en route apparently for Silesia. There appears to be evidence of increased German military activity on the Polish frontier but at present this seems to be of screening (*sic*) and no concentration yet expected. . . .⁴ by night of troops from Pomerania to East Prussia continues but Poles are satisfied that relatively small numbers hitherto affected. Easter leave in German army appears normal. Estimate that just over 9,000 all ranks have left East Prussia for Germany during the past few days. It is however possible that leave and also preparations for Herr Hitler's birthday may be camouflage for preparatory or precautionary measures in progress. Compare recent precedent in Vienna.⁵

Please inform War Office.

Repeated to Paris, Rome and Warsaw.

¹ Not printed. This telegram reported a message of April 4 from H.M. Consul at Breslau that there was no foundation for rumours of German troop movements on the German-Polish frontier in Silesia.

² i.e. 'readiness to move'.

³ See Chapter II.

⁴ The text is here uncertain.

⁵ The reference is to the preparations for a visit by Herr Hitler to Vienna and a military parade to celebrate the anniversary of the 'Anschluss'. See Volume IV of this Series, No. 221.

No. 32

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)

No. 845 [C 5053/54/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, April 8, 1939

Sir,

During the course of a conversation with the French Ambassador this afternoon, M. Corbin asked me whether I had any information as to the reactions of Germany to our Anglo-Polish Agreement. In reply I said that I had only so far seen the reactions in the press. The Ambassador said that his information was that the Führer was angry and would no doubt use strong language. I gathered from him that it was not the expectation of the French Government that anything more decisive would immediately occur in that

quarter. M. Corbin volunteered the observation that the statement made by the Prime Minister on Tuesday¹ in the House of Commons seemed to him very satisfactory, though a good deal was left to depend upon the attitude of the Polish Government. By this he meant the position as it was left in regard to Roumania, and on this he volunteered the information that the Roumanian Minister in London was very mistrustful of M. Beck. The new Roumanian Foreign Minister,² however, was disposed to judge M. Beck more generously.

2. I told M. Corbin that we had instructed Your Excellency to give M. Bonnet full information as to what had passed between M. Beck and ourselves, and that both we and the Polish Government should pursue our diplomatic action at Bucharest.

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

¹ This date appears to be a mistake for Thursday, April 6. See Parl. Deb., 5th ser., H. of C., vol. 345, cols. 2996-9.

² M. Gafencu succeeded M. Comnène as Roumanian Foreign Minister on December 21, 1938.

No. 33

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 14)

No. 91 [C 5249/54/18]

WARSAW, April 8, 1939

My Lord,

With reference to my telegram No. 99¹ of the 1st April, I have the honour to report that the greatest satisfaction has been caused in all classes of the population here by the Prime Minister's declaration of the 31st March and by the results of M. Beck's visit to London. Great Britain has for long been regarded as almost the only sane and stable element in a distracted world and that our traditional isolation should be abandoned in favour of Poland has come as little short of a miracle. Such an outcome has naturally been regarded as a great success for M. Beck, and he has received numerous telegrams of congratulation from all parts of Poland. Many people have called or sent their cards to this Embassy in token of their satisfaction. The giving of a reciprocal obligation to Great Britain has also been very well received. The Anglo-Polish Alliance, as many newspapers do not hesitate to call it, is regarded as already one of the corner-stones of European security, and I believe many people are sincerely gratified that Great Britain should have been ready to accept a reciprocal undertaking. As to this, it is only fair to add that there has been a certain fear in many quarters lest Poland should be dragged into quarrelling with Germany when it was not in her true interest to do so, but if isolation is impossible for Great Britain, it is even more dangerous for Poland, and the net reaction of public opinion has been one of very real satisfaction.

2. The rejoicings, while genuine and most sincere, have, however, been

¹ Not printed.

sober and discreet. Germany's great increase of power in recent months and an uncertainty as to what Herr Hitler may do next have induced a healthy caution in most thinking people here. The Press Department of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs have issued orders to the press to refrain from any exaggeration and any provocative taunts to Germany. The press have followed these injunctions, and I have felt it well to give similar advice to British press correspondents here. The population has been almost as discreet as the press, so far as I am aware, but M. Kowalski, one of the leaders of the National Democrat party, which has always been strongly anti-German, made a speech at Lodz on the 2nd April, in the course of which he said that, if France disregarded ethnographic boundaries and claimed a frontier on the Rhine, then Poland might also claim her old historical boundaries of the Sudeten line and the Lower Oder. I see from Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes's telegram No. 238, Saving,² that the German press has referred to this speech, but it is not of any real significance, nor has it been widely reported except in the National Democrat press.

3. There have been numerous patriotic demonstrations all over Poland in the course of the last week, but while the recent development of relations between Poland and Great Britain no doubt has been discussed, their primary object has been to collect contributions for the recently announced Air Defence Loan, to which large sums (relatively, that is, to the wealth of this country) are being subscribed daily. It is not true (as alleged, for instance, in Berlin telegram No. 24³) that anti-German feeling has been further aroused since—still less by—the Prime Minister's declaration of the 31st March.

4. 'Independence' is the watchword of to-day in Poland, and in harping on that theme the Polish press has sought in some measure to reassure Germany as to the possible implications of the new Anglo-Polish Agreement. Almost all organs of the press, from 'Polska Zbrojna', the organ of the General Staff, and the 'Gazeta Polska' to the independent Conservative 'Czas' and Socialist 'Robotnik', have emphasised that Poland's foreign policy would continue to be independent and that its principles would remain unaltered.

5. In an unusually authoritative leading article of the 7th April the semi-official 'Gazeta Polska' points out that three principles constitute the pillars on which Poland's foreign policy rests, to wit, the increase of Poland's own strength, the friendly settlement of neighbourly disputes and loyalty to Poland's alliances.

6. Poland's strength consisted not only of her armed forces and the moral preparedness of the people, but also of the full independence of her internal and foreign policy.

7. The friendly settlement of all neighbourly disputes had been, and would be, a constant element of Poland's foreign policy. It had not been, and would not be, Poland's intention to join any ideological *blocs*, no matter who they were directed against—neither the Anti-Comintern Pact, nor any 'anti-Fascist' or 'encirclement' combination.

² Not printed.

³ The reference is uncertain, but may be to Berlin telegram No. 234, printed as No. 7.

8. As for Poland's defensive alliances, their clearly bilateral character and the fact that they only operated in the event of aggression against one of the partners should allay any doubts. They were not a threat to anyone. On the other hand, recent events had increased Poland's watchfulness and she had shown that she was determined to defend all her rights and interests.

9. Great Britain's understanding for Poland's position and the results of the London negotiations would be accepted by Polish public opinion with general and sincere satisfaction. The outcome would be regarded as a great triumph of both internal and foreign policy. The London Agreement increased Poland's security, improved her prestige abroad, and did not alter the inviolable principles of her policy.

10. I am sending a copy of this despatch to His Majesty's Ambassador at Berlin.

I have, &c.,
H. W. KENNARD

No. 34

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 11)

No. 427 [C 4930/15/18]

PARIS, April 8, 1939

His Majesty's Ambassador at Paris presents his compliments to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and has the honour to transmit to him two memoranda by the Assistant Military Attaché regarding the probable intentions of Herr Hitler and Signor Mussolini.

ENCLOSURE 1 IN NO. 34

(No. 453)

The Ambassador

PARIS, April 7, 1939

I saw Colonel Gauché, Head of the Deuxième Bureau, at 2.30 this afternoon. I found him in rather a pessimistic mood. Hitler, he said, is in a rage over Colonel Beck's visit to London and is quite capable of starting the 'bagarre générale' at any moment by air attacks on London and Paris. One must not assume that an attack by Germany will be preceded by mobilisation of the Army. Therefore it would be unwise to count too heavily on the established fact that Easter leave for the troops has started in Germany. Hitler, he believes, had intended to shake off the ripe plum of Danzig on the 1st April and this particular move must only be considered as temporarily postponed. An attack on Poland within the next few days is quite possible.

The seizure of Albania¹ would give the Italians a 'point de départ': this is Albania's only real value to Italy. The departure may be in either or both of two directions:

¹ See Chapter II.

- (i) against Jugoslavia.
and/or (ii) against Greece.

This moment has probably been chosen for taking action in the Adriatic because the Axis fears that shortly Mr. Chamberlain may bring Roumania, Greece and even Jugoslavia definitely into line against the Dictators. If Germany and Italy operate together the Jugoslavs are in great peril: the internal situation is none too good and the independence of the country might be destroyed in the course of two or three days.

From several dependable sources Colonel Gauché was informed that Italian *Regular* troops, including Bersaglieri, had recently been landed in Spain. Reinforcements have been arriving there since 23rd March. Franco is not to be trusted and we must be ready to repel an attack on Gibraltar.

The information given to Your Excellency by the Political Director at the Quai d'Orsay this morning² came, not as Captain Huet told me, from Switzerland but from Czecho-Slovakia: no confirmatory information had been received on this point and Colonel Gauché did not regard the source as particularly reliable.

I think his attitude is that war is almost certain some time this year and if the Germans choose to hurl themselves against the Maginot Line so much the worse for them.

As the above is rather vague and mostly in the nature of opinions as to the Dictators' intentions, I asked Colonel Gauché for a written note on the situation and this he promised to let me have at 6.30 this evening.³

C. A. DE LINDE

Major, Assistant Military Attaché

² See Nos. 20-3.

³ See enclosure 2.

ENCLOSURE 2 IN NO. 34

(No. 454)

The Ambassador

PARIS, April 7, 1939

1. The following note was given me by Colonel Gauché at 6.45 this evening:—

'Les renseignements recueillis dans la journée du 7 Avril 1939 signalent à la date des 4, 5 et 6 Avril le départ de nombreux permissionnaires dans les Wehrkreise V, VI et XII. Les permissions sont normalement accordées dans tout le Reich, y compris la Marige et la Police.'

2. I had hoped for a more extensive summary of the position, but he said that he had no other important information: everything seemed calm in Germany, though the calm was more than possibly quite superficial.

3. He added that one item of news which he had received some days ago had just been confirmed: viz., that a force of 250 aeroplanes (one-third

fighters two-thirds bombers) had been sent recently to Bremen (Lemwerde? [*sic* ? Lemförde] Aerodrome). This was about five times the normal number of machines stationed at this place.

4. Immediately after seeing Colonel Gauché, I had the opportunity of seeing Commandant Carolet of the German section of the Deuxième Bureau, and he told me that the latest news indicated that the 13 mobile divisions of the German Army (4 motorised, 5 armoured and 4 light) were now, to the best of his belief, disposed thus:

(i) *Still in Czecho-Slovakia.*

(a) 2nd Motorised Division.

13th „ „

29th „ „

and possibly 20th Motorised Division.

(b) 2nd Armoured Division

3rd „ „

(c) 2nd Light Division

4th „ „

(ii) *Started to leave Czecho-Slovakia night of 6th or morning of 7th April*

(a) possibly 20th Motorised Division

(b) 4th Armoured Division

5th „ „

(c) 3rd Light Division.

(iii) *At normal peace station in Germany.*

(a) ———

(b) 1st Armoured Division

(at Weimar since 26.3.39)

(c) 1st Light Division

(never left Wuppertal)

This made up the total of thirteen Mobile Divisions.

C. A. DE LINDE

Major, Assistant Military Attaché

No. 35

Letter from Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Sir O. Sargent

[C 5173/1110/55]

BRITISH EMBASSY, WARSAW, April 8, 1939

Dear Sargent,

With reference to my despatch No. 83¹ of April 5, I have had a conversation with the French Ambassador which confirms my apprehensions as to

¹ No. 12.

the state of the Polish Army. Noël agrees generally with my Service Attachés' views and says that he considers that there are two special points which should receive immediate consideration. Firstly, the need for money in order to develop the home production of armaments and munitions here, and secondly the need for reserves of such war material as petrol, coal, munitions and so forth. Noël has been informed by French experts who have recently visited the Industrial Triangle² that if the Poles had the money they could double or quadruple their output of armaments there. He fears that the Poles have not collected any reserves of essential war material and considers that they should be urged and pressed to do so in view of the fact that Upper Silesia and the Corridor would presumably fall into German hands immediately on the outbreak of hostilities.

Noël has recently seen the Service Attachés of the French Embassy in Moscow who state that whereas communications are bad and the Russian armed forces are generally not in a highly efficient state they nevertheless could be most useful to Poland in the supply of all kinds of war material, and further that their air force could greatly embarrass the Germans by bombing important points in East Prussia, which they could easily do. He does not exclude the possibility that the Poles, if desperate, might agree to Russian aid in the air and while the military authorities here will not commit themselves to any definite attitude, he thinks that they might be finally persuaded in dire straits to accept assistance from Russia provided it did not involve Russian troops entering Polish territory on the ground.

Yours ever,

H. W. KENNARD

² i.e. Polish Silesia.

No. 36

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw)

No. 88 Telegraphic [C 5063/54/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 10, 1939*¹

I understand Polish Government, following on our talks with M. Beck, are consulting with Roumanian Government on the question of a Polish guarantee to Roumania against German threat to latter's independence.

We trust that M. Beck will make every effort to secure rapid progress and will keep us promptly informed.

¹ The time of despatch of this telegram is not recorded.

*Viscount Halifax to Sir R. Hoare (Bucharest)*¹*No. 163 [C 5054/3356/18]*FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 10, 1939*

Sir,

The Roumanian Minister called this afternoon to bring M. Cretzianu, the Secretary-General of the Roumanian Ministry for Foreign Affairs, who had come to London on a confidential mission to discuss the British proposals.

2. M. Cretzianu said that he had been entrusted with this mission by his Government as the telephone and telegraph lines from Roumania passed through Germany and Italy, and it was therefore safer to talk direct. He had come to tell me once again of the great interest and pleasure with which the Roumanian Government had received our proposals of the 31st March.² He understood that Roumania's position was important to us and that we were ready to defend Roumania if Roumania defended herself against any act of aggression. The Roumanian Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs had already declared in precise and categorical terms that Roumania would defend herself if attacked. The important factor was that it was of common interest that Roumania should not become a slave country and that she should be defended if attacked.

3. I observed here that, in order to be clear, I would recall that in our communication to the Roumanian Government two conditions were stipulated—the willingness of Roumania to defend herself, and also that of Poland to associate herself in the guarantee to Roumania.

3A. M. Cretzianu said that he understood that Colonel Beck had raised the question of the Polish-Roumanian Treaty, which he wished to discuss direct with Roumania. I said that what I thought Colonel Beck had felt was that it was difficult for him to discuss this matter with us before talking to his ally Roumania. M. Cretzianu said that Roumania was quite ready to discuss it with Colonel Beck, but the Treaty was quite clear. According to Articles 1 and 2, which he quoted, the Treaty did not only apply against aggression by Russia, but against any aggression, although the technical arrangements contemplated thereunder had only been completed in respect of aggression by Russia. It would be a pity to minimise the Treaty, and M. Cretzianu hoped that the negotiations with Colonel Beck would clear up the point.

4. The Roumanian Government were anxious, however, that His Majesty's Government should make a declaration of their willingness to assist in the defence of the Roumanian frontier, if attacked, even before the negotiations with Colonel Beck were completed. Sir A. Cadogan had already mentioned to him the idea of a Four-Power pact to include England, France, Poland and Roumania. M. Cretzianu did not think that such a plan would succeed, as

¹ A summary of the conversation reported in this despatch was telegraphed to Sir R. Hoare on April 11 in Foreign Office telegram No. 106.

² See Volume IV of this Series, No. 538.

Poland would be afraid of anything resembling encirclement of Germany. He doubted, therefore, whether agreement could be reached on such lines.

5. I here enquired whether it was then the view of the Roumanian Government that, if Colonel Beck objected to the idea of a Four-Power arrangement, it might be possible for him to reassert the Treaty with Roumania and for other countries to give guarantees to Roumania which would fit in with the Polish Treaty. M. Cretzianu agreed, but asked whether our declaration would be dependent on agreement with Poland. Roumania was very anxious to obtain an immediate guarantee in case of the Polish agreement being either delayed or not reached. I said that I understood the point clearly, but I could not go further at present. I would like to know what, if things developed as he anticipated, would be the form in which Roumania would expect French and British assistance to take. M. Cretzianu said that Roumania would expect France and Great Britain to attack Germany by land, sea and air and also, if possible, to send aircraft, pilots, mechanics and anti-aircraft guns as well as British and French divisions to Roumania through the Dardanelles. I said that these were technical questions which were outside my competence, but it was useful to know what was in his mind. M. Cretzianu went on to say that help would be possible even before a war. It would be most useful if His Majesty's Government could help in respect of war material, and possibly the Foreign Office might arrange for the Roumanian Minister to see the War Office and armament experts.

6. M. Tilea said that he thought this was already going on, but that it had been stopped owing to the necessity for equipping the Territorials. He suggested that arms might, none the less, be sent to Roumania, where they would be used by trained troops while the Territorials were being trained. I said that I thought this was trying to move rather too quick and that it would be best to get the political situation cleared up before we went on to discuss these military problems.

7. M. Cretzianu then went on to say that some misgivings had been aroused about the character of the declaration which had been given to Poland, referring, as it did, to her independence and not to her frontiers. If it were decided to make a similar declaration in respect of Roumania, owing to the great effect it would have on her morale and as a deterrent to Germany, the Roumanian Government thought it should contain a clear indication that frontiers would not be discussed. It was also important that some such declaration should be made as soon as possible. Moreover, such an assurance covering frontiers would have a stiffening effect on the inhabitants because they would know that even if their territory was overrun they would have some hope of recovering it at the peace conference. I made no comment on these observations beyond saying that I would take note of them.

8. M. Cretzianu then reverted to the idea of a Four-Power treaty, and said that anything resembling encirclement of Germany would be difficult for Roumania, as it would be likely to provoke Germany, and to precipitate the crisis which we all wished to avoid. The other question which he wished to mention was that of Soviet Russia. It was important that it should never

appear that Roumania was being faced with a choice between Germany and Soviet Russia. A formal Four-Power agreement, including France, would in practice mean the inclusion of Soviet Russia owing to her connexion with France. It was necessary to present the arrangement as one in which France, Great Britain and Poland were spontaneously offering help to Roumania.

9. I asked whether if Roumania received a guarantee from France the effect on Roumanian minds would not be that she would also be receiving help from Soviet Russia. M. Cretzianu said that this would not be the case if the declaration were given spontaneously. He did not say that if war took place Roumania would refuse nor even that she might not seek Soviet help, but it would be impossible for her to do so in advance. He therefore favoured spontaneous British and French declarations.

10. I said that I understood the feeling of the Roumanian public, but at the same time it was important, from the general point of view, that in certain circumstances Roumania, if invaded, should be able to count on Soviet help. M. Cretzianu agreed, but said it would not be possible to enter into an agreement with Soviet Russia in advance as public opinion was extremely nervous of being sold to Russia. Germany had worked on Roumanian opinion through the Iron Guard, and was already exploiting the idea that Roumania had to choose between Germany and Soviet Russia.

11. M. Cretzianu emphasised his view that events were moving very quickly. In Roumanian opinion all points of danger would benefit by the help given to Roumania. He did not think it should be assumed that nothing could be done if no reciprocal guarantee were given by Poland. If Germany attacked Poland, she would attack Roumania at the same time, owing to the necessity of obtaining the oil-fields. If Roumania were attacked first it would be up to British diplomacy in Warsaw to see that Poland came into action. Great Britain had said that she contemplated a permanent and formal treaty. Would she conclude this before Poland gave a promise to help Roumania, or would the treaty be dependent on the pledge of Poland to help? I said that in his public statement³ the Prime Minister had only announced that His Majesty's Government were holding consultations with other Governments, but that in the meantime before those consultations were concluded they would feel bound at once to lend the Polish Government all the support in their power if attacked. M. Cretzianu again asked if Great Britain would sign a treaty even without Poland giving a pledge to Roumania. I said that we must await the result of Colonel Beck's negotiations with Roumania. Our main concern was to get the greatest degree of solidarity between Poland, France, Roumania and Great Britain and to strengthen each other. The question would have to be considered if one should do as much as one could even if one could not get the whole system.

12. I next enquired what Roumanian relations were with Hungary. M. Cretzianu said that they had stiffened up appreciably lately. He did not attach great importance to the assurance which Colonel Beck had received

³ i.e. on March 31. See Volume IV of this Series, No. 582 and Parl. Deb., 5th ser., H. of C., vol. 345, col. 2415.

from the Hungarian Government and which he had mentioned during his visit to London.⁴ Roumania had asked for a non-aggression declaration with Hungary, to which, as I understood him, Hungary had only replied by saying that orders had been given to her troops to respect the frontiers.

13. In reply to a question as to whether he was anticipating trouble through Germany pushing Hungary, M. Cretzianu replied that if an encirclement agreement were concluded Germany would probably act in that way, but, if the course he had advocated were adopted, he could not believe that it would be the case. Germany had not, for instance, objected when the Roumanian Prime Minister had declared that the country would defend itself if attacked. After all, Roumania had no frontier with Germany.

14. To a further enquiry as to the Turkish attitude, M. Cretzianu said that it was most important from the point of view of Bulgaria. Turkey would attack Bulgaria if the latter attacked Roumania. Greece was weak and Yugoslavia was surrounded. Turkey would allow war material, ships and troops to pass through the Dardanelles to the help of Roumania. Roumanian relations with Poland were at present good. Poland had wanted Roumania to help bring about the joint Polish-Hungarian frontier, but Roumania had declined to take part in any scheme endangering Czecho-Slovak integrity and this had led to a 'refroidissement'. This had, however, improved later and had disappeared with the disappearance of Czecho-Slovakia. None the less, he believed that the Poles could have helped more in Budapest in the recent tension between Hungary and Roumania, but they were too anxious over Carpatho-Ukraine.

15. In reply to a further question, M. Cretzianu said that, if Germany attempted to coerce Hungary to attack Roumania, he was afraid that Hungary would give way. Hungary must be regarded now as in the hands of Germany. The Roumanian Minister at Budapest had told him that the first thing Hungary would do in the event of war would be to attack Roumania: she had a fair army, which would be able to draw upon the resources of German equipment.

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

⁴ The reference may be to the letter from the Hungarian Minister in London to M. Beck. See No. 30, note 2.

No. 38

Sir G. Knox (Budapest) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 14)
No. 53 [C 5190/71/21]

BUDAPEST, April 10, 1939

My Lord,

After the seizure of Ruthenia, Hungary did not rest on her laurels: in the early morning of the 23rd March the Hungarian troops stationed on the line which had hitherto been considered as the border between Ruthenia and Slovakia advanced to the westward to a depth of from 10 to 15 kilom. The

object of this movement was, according to the Hungarian General Staff, to occupy the line of the watershed covering the road and railway in the valley of the Ung.

2. The Slovak Minister for Foreign Affairs at once protested against Hungarian military activity in Slovak territory. Count Csaky replied promising an immediate investigation. He drew the attention of the Slovak Government to the fact that, the eastern frontier of Slovakia having never been delimited, it was possible that some local incident had occurred. He added that there was no question of military operations and that the allegations of certain foreign news agencies that Hungarian troops had taken military action in Eastern Slovakia at German instigation, or with the passive approval of the Reich, were obviously untrue. This statement is typical of Count Csaky's public utterances during the recent period of tension, both in the blatancy and clumsiness of its perversions of the truth.

3. On the 23rd March and the following day, desultory counter-attacks were made by the Slovak infantry and armoured cars, which were repulsed. Slovak aeroplanes also bombed Ungvar, causing some casualties, but the Hungarians claimed to have shot down all the ten aircraft engaged; they also, in retaliation, bombed the aerodrome of Iglo, where it is said that twenty-eight aeroplanes were destroyed.

4. On the 25th March there were again some minor engagements, after which both parties—presumably at Germany's suggestion—agreed to negotiate, and a Slovak delegation arrived in Budapest for this purpose on the 27th March. The Hungarians appear, on this occasion, to have put forward exaggerated demands; the Slovak delegation returned to Bratislava for further instructions, and there was much talk of another impending Hungarian advance in Slovakia. At this point the German Government evidently intervened, since the German Minister told a member of my staff that he had received an assurance from the Hungarian Minister for Foreign Affairs that the Hungarian troops would not advance west of the line which they had occupied. This intervention proved decisive, a general agreement on the new frontier was reached on the 31st March and was formally signed on the 4th April.

5. As in the case of the Hungarian seizure of Ruthenia, it is not yet possible to affirm what was the exact degree of German complicity. The fact, however, that the signature of the German-Roumanian Commercial Agreement followed the mobilisation of Hungarian troops on the Roumanian frontier, as the Hungarian incursion into Slovakia preceded by a few hours the signature of the German-Slovak Treaty of Protection, inevitably arouses the suspicion that Hungary is being used as a German tool against her neighbours. It is, in the case of Slovakia, difficult to believe that Germany would have allowed Hungary to invade a State which had just placed itself under the protection of the Führer of the Reich, unless this invasion had also served her own ends.

6. The impression here remains that Hungary's adventure in Slovakia is by no means finished. It is felt that, Germany having drawn her military line, in the Treaty of Protection, on the heights west of the River Waag, the part

of Slovakia lying east of that line is an eventual no-man's land. This consists in general, of a poor and mountainous area whose principal wealth is timber. Since the plain which borders it to the south fell almost in its entirety to Hungary by the Vienna Award, it cannot feed itself. It is therefore generally argued here that Germany is not likely for long to draw on her own resources for the maintenance of a population which it does not appear necessary to incorporate for strategic ends.

7. Hungary, on the other hand, by the reattachment of this part of Slovakia, would not only enjoy a satisfaction of revisionist aims, but would secure the solid advantage of obtaining, at little distance from the centres of consumption, the timber which she lacks in exchange for some part of her surplus cereals. Whether Hungary receives this satisfaction or not will depend, of course, on how far it may be compatible with German plans. It is, I think, not too extravagant to conjecture that Germany may be keeping this area in reserve in order to present it to this country when the moment comes to arrange for the passage of German troops through Hungary.

8. That the moment for such a movement will ultimately come, whether in the direction of Roumania or Yugoslavia, appears now to be as near to certainty as can be said of anything in human affairs. Looking from this angle at Germany, on whose initiative events in this part of the world must depend, one feels above all that the momentum now attained by six years' intense preparation, moral, political and material, for war will move on towards its logical end. It would seem that any change of heart or of policy, inspired by the growing resistance of the Western Powers, would be impotent against the economic and social forces that have been raised, so that any attempt now to arrest or to reverse the machine of war and to revert to a peacetime economy and organisation would open up in Germany prospects of such complete bankruptcy and collapse that it must inevitably fail.

9. I am sending copies of this despatch to His Majesty's representatives at Berlin, Warsaw and Prague.

I have, &c.,
G. G. KNOX

No. 39

Letter from Sir R. Campbell (Belgrade) to Sir A. Cadogan
[C 5283/15/18]

BRITISH LEGATION, BELGRADE, *April 10, 1939*

I am writing like this so that I can keep a carbon copy.¹ Bag must close in ten minutes.

Prince Paul has just told me that Attolico, Italian Ambassador in Berlin, who was a close friend of our new Minister of Foreign Affairs here,² late Yugoslav Minister in Berlin, had sent a message to him via the new Minister

¹ The letter was written in pencil.

² M. Cinkar Marcovic.

to the effect that he believed the Germans to have decided on a 'preventive' war, i.e. to strike before we had completed their 'encirclement'. This may of course be bluff prompted by the Germans, but Attolico seems to have begged the Yugoslav Minister in Berlin not to trust it to cypher telegram but to send it by safe hand (which he did). On the other hand it *may* be his genuine opinion, and indicate that the Italians are terrified of being drawn into a war. It's impossible now to know what to believe and what not to believe.

Another indication in the same direction is that the German Military Attaché here, who, from remarks which he let drop, undoubtedly had previous knowledge of *every* German *coup* up to date, remarked the other day to the Yugoslav General Staff that he had hoped there would be a quiet time until after Hitler's birthday (? April 10³) but that now he felt anything but sure of it. This may seem a rather light source, but every time before when he has let fall a remark of the kind it has been justified.

Prince Paul also asked me whether I thought we were wise to spread abroad quite so openly what we were doing by way of guarantees to the smaller Powers (e.g. the B.B.C. on Greece this evening). It embarrassed them (the smaller Powers) and might drive Hitler the more surely to a preventive war if he was really contemplating one. Wouldn't it be wiser, asked Prince Paul, to keep that sort of thing quieter?

Lastly, he told me that he was now so nearly certain of war that he was sending the four children (two of his and two of the Queen's) to England in two days although they had only just come back here for the holidays. He said he was extremely anxious that this should not get known. I asked whether he would like me to ask the Foreign Office if they could get the English press to keep quiet, but added that I was afraid it might only serve to draw attention. He agreed that I was probably right: I therefore only mention [it] so that you should know and be in a position to do what you can to damp down the press if it *does* start to talk about it.

Bag *must* close.

³ Herr Hitler's birthday was on April 20.

No. 40

Sir R. Hoare (Bucharest) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 11, 9.0 p.m.)

No. 109 Telegraphic [C 5105/3386/18]

BUCHAREST, April 11, 1939, 7.39 p.m.

Your telegram No. 79 to Warsaw.¹

From paragraph 6 I conclude that the Polish Government are not prepared, except with the concurrence of the Hungarian Government, to contract to assist Roumania in resisting a German attack on Roumania via Hungary which is the only direct line of approach. This confirms the last paragraph of my telegram No. 105.²

¹ Not printed. See No. 24, note 2.

² No. 29.

In conversation yesterday, before I had seen this telegram, Minister for Foreign Affairs told me that he still had the impression that the Polish Minister for Foreign Affairs much disliked the idea of guaranteeing Roumania. If that was so, the latter disliked the idea of bringing pressure to bear on Polish Government. He was inclined to wonder whether it was not still possible to modify the original plan. Why not maintain the Anglo-French-Polish defensive pact and as regards Roumania, let her receive an Anglo-French guarantee in return for her declared intention to resist aggression. He felt sure that, if France and Great Britain were at war with Germany, Poland would be forced to join in. He reminded me that, as reported in my telegram No. 89,³ Roumanian Government had at one moment thought of trying to obtain political guarantee from Germany when trade agreement was signed. He rather thought that the German Government would have been willing to give one and would still be willing and he would not be surprised if the matter were raised during his visit to Berlin. He was not sure that it would not be a good move to try, with the approval of Great Britain and France, for such a guarantee to reinforce and complete Anglo-French declaration and he was not sure that a similar arrangement could not be reached regarding Yugoslavia.

We agreed to revert to the question today in case your telegram under reference threw further light on the situation.

Repeated to Berlin, Warsaw, Budapest, Bucharest, Athens and Belgrade.

³ Not printed. This telegram of March 31 reported as indicated above.

No. 41

Sir R. Hoare (Bucharest) to Viscount Halifax

(Received April 11, 8.10 p.m.)

No. 110 Telegraphic [C 5106/54/18]

BUCHAREST, *April 11, 1939, 7.40 p.m.*

Minister for Foreign Affairs to whom I read this morning my immediately preceding telegram¹ omitting paragraph 1, said that it fairly represented views he had expressed to me. He held that proposed Polish-Roumanian Pact if achieved would be regarded by Germany as an attempt at encirclement. If Roumanian Government, as French Government had just urged him to do, pressed the Polish Government to conclude such a Pact, failed to obtain it and British and French Governments therefore cancelled proposed offer to support Roumania in resisting aggression, Roumania's position would be more difficult than ever. Attempt at collective security pacts had failed in the past and they were anathema to Germany. He believed that Roumania's best contribution to peace, if there was still hope, was to convince Germany that the door was open to all for peaceful and productive work in the Balkans.

If war breaks out between the Great Powers he is convinced that Germany

¹ No. 40.

will attack the oil fields. Roumania would then fight whether or not she had Pact with Poland and whatever Poland did.

Repeated to Berlin, Warsaw, Budapest, Athens, Belgrade and Angora.

No. 42

*Viscount Halifax to Sir W. Seeds (Moscow)*¹

No. 230 [C 5068/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 11, 1939*

Sir,

I asked the Soviet Ambassador to call and see me this morning in order that I might keep him in touch with recent developments.

2. I told him of the general view His Majesty's Government had taken of the Italian action in Albania and went on to say that an even acuter cause of anxiety in the last two or three days had been reports of contemplated Italian action in regard to Corfu. In consequence of these we had thought it right to make our position plain to the Italian Government and we had been glad to learn that, whether in consequence of this or because the reports themselves had never been well-founded, Signor Mussolini had readily given the most emphatic assurances in regard to Italian intentions concerning Greece both to ourselves and to the Greek Government.²

3. I anticipated that we should be making a statement on our general attitude towards the Mediterranean side of the problem on Thursday.³

4. There were, as we saw it, two divisions of what was perhaps essentially a single problem: the Mediterranean side and the Roumanian side. From both points of view the position of Turkey was of great importance and we were accordingly in consultation with the Turkish Government as to their attitude in hypothetical circumstances that might arise in connexion with each of these areas.

5. In this connexion I asked the Ambassador what exactly the Turco-Soviet Pact⁴ at present amounted to. M. Maisky replied that this Pact was only one of non-aggression and did not include any obligations of mutual assistance. The relations of the Soviet Government, however, with the Turkish Government were very close and he had no doubt that if Turkey was ever attacked in one way or another Russia would help her.

6. I proceeded to tell the Ambassador of how we had left the Roumanian side of the case after our discussions with M. Beck. The position had then been that M. Beck should at once consult with the Roumanian Government on our proposals, on which he felt it difficult to reach conclusions before such direct contact with a Government with whom Poland was already in alliance.

¹ A summary of the conversation recorded in this despatch was telegraphed to Sir W. Seeds on April 11, in Foreign Office telegram No. 58.

² See Chapter II.

³ April 13. For this statement see *Parl. Deb.*, 5th ser., H. of C., vol. 346, cols. 5-15.

⁴ The Turco-Soviet Treaty of 1925 is printed in *British and Foreign State Papers*, Vol. 125, p. 1001.

We were taking steps to ask the Polish Government to lose no time in the prosecution of their enquiries at Bucharest and we hoped to have the result of these at an early date.

7. Meanwhile, I had seen the Roumanian Minister yesterday,⁵ who had put various questions and made various proposals to me which, however, I had told him would have to be considered in the light of the reports we looked forward to receiving from the Polish Government as to their own conversations with the Roumanian Government. I told M. Maisky quite frankly that the Roumanian Government appeared to me in some degree to feel the same difficulties about the direct association with the Soviet Government that were felt by the Polish Government, and that the Roumanian Government appeared to entertain some fear lest open association of themselves in some general pact including Russia would not⁶ be likely to have the effect of provoking from Germany the action that we were all concerned to try and avoid.

8. M. Maisky then entered upon some discussion of the respective feelings of Poland and Roumania towards Russia, from which two principal points emerged. The first was that he thought the Polish attitude was largely governed by M. Beck's personal judgment and that M. Beck had always been pro-German; it was M. Beck's influence that had greatly affected the Roumanian attitude. The second point was that M. Maisky did not readily see why, if we and France wished to help Poland or Roumania, we could not make such help conditional on their adopting a reasonable attitude towards the acceptance of help from Russia. I told him that we should not certainly exclude such a possibility from our mind, but that, on the other hand, we could not ignore the possibility that, if anything of this sort were forced upon Poland and Roumania, they might in self-defence feel obliged to enter some formal protest of dissociation, the general effect of which would be damaging to the common cause we all wished to serve. I suggested accordingly to M. Maisky that it really was for the Soviet Government to play their part in an endeavour to remove what no doubt seemed to him unreal and unfounded anxieties which seemed, none the less, to be really entertained by the Polish and Roumanian Governments. M. Maisky said, in reply to all this, that the Soviet Government had shown their willingness to assist with any proposals that might be made from our side. They had first of all suggested a conference; they had then expressed their willingness to take part in the Four-Power Pact, and they would always be ready to consider with sympathy any concrete proposals that might be made to them. His general feeling was that it was not enough to make bilateral pacts covering this country or that, but that what was required was some general undertaking on the part of all countries to co-operate in a system of real collective security.

9. He asked me whether in his conversations here M. Beck had made any suggestion in regard to the other Baltic countries. To this I replied that M. Beck had certainly mentioned the interest of Poland in the other Baltic

⁵ See No. 37.

⁶ This word appears to have been inserted in error.

countries, and had expressed the view that in any wider arrangements to be made the Polish Government would wish to have regard to their position. M. Maisky then asked me more precisely whether M. Beck had suggested any desire on the part of the Polish Government to obtain possession of Latvian ports. M. Maisky supposed that if Poland should ever lose the Corridor, the Polish Government would wish to have through Latvian ports an access to the sea. I told him that no such suggestion had been made as M. Beck did not contemplate abandoning the Corridor.

10. As he left M. Maisky expressed the view that the action of the democracies was much too slow in comparison with that of the dictator countries, to which I replied that I thought the charge of dilatory action hardly lay, considering that it was only during the last ten days that we had defined very precisely the position of this country towards Poland and by other means had made its attitude also very plain concerning the Mediterranean. M. Maisky finally said that no one could, of course, attach the slightest value to Signor Mussolini's assurances.⁷

11. M. Maisky's attitude during our conversations was quite friendly, but I could not feel at its conclusion that we had made any great progress towards the solution of the real difficulties of which His Majesty's Government are necessarily conscious, but which M. Maisky and the Soviet Government persistently appear to me to ignore.

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

⁷ The reference is presumably to Signor Mussolini's assurance to the Greek Government. See No. 110.

No. 43

Mr. Pares (Bratislava) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 14)

No. 20 [C 5201/7/12]

BRATISLAVA, April 11, 1939

His Majesty's Consul at Bratislava presents his compliments to His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State, and has the honour to transmit to him a copy of his despatch No. 11 to His Majesty's Chargé d'Affaires at Prague, dated the 11th April, respecting conditions in Slovakia.

ENCLOSURE IN No. 43

Mr. Pares to Mr. Troutbeck

(No. 11)

BRATISLAVA, April 11, 1939

Sir,

I have the honour to state that a review of the present state of affairs in Slovakia, after nearly a month of independence, seems to indicate that, in spite of the manner in which the declaration of independence was brought

about and of the disturbing effects of the Hungarian invasion of Eastern Slovakia, conditions are more stable than anybody expected. The satisfactory terms obtained from Germany in the economic sphere have done much to help the Government to get the new State on its feet. About ten days ago a wave of repression began and the Government sent several well-known politicians of the Opposition to fill the newly opened concentration camp in Ilava. There seems to have been little real justification for the Government's action, which is believed to have been influenced chiefly by M. Tuka's desire to revenge himself on his old adversaries. However, I have learned from a reliable source that already some prominent persons have been removed from Ilava, among whom is Dr. Jan Pauliny-Toth, leader of the former Slovak National party (the Protestant autonomist group). It is not known where they are being detained at present, but they are being confined under less disagreeable conditions. Although the chief power still remains in the hands of the Germanophil group led by M. Durcansky, M. Tuka and M. Mach there are signs that M. Sidor has not yet been wholly relegated to the background. An interesting article published in 'Narodni Noviny', the newspaper of the former Slovak National party, on the 5th April contains a leading article reprinted from the official gazette of the Slovak Protestant Church, in which the co-operation of the Protestant autonomists is offered to the Government. It is difficult to say exactly what importance may be attached to his offer, all the more because several similar offers have been made in the past and have been subsequently scornfully criticised in 'Slovak'. The Clerical party consider that the Protestants should join with them unconditionally, but the latter have hitherto been unwilling to relinquish entirely their claim to exercise a certain influence on political affairs. Nevertheless, the fact that the offer of co-operation has been repeated once more is of considerable importance.

2. At a meeting of the Executive Committee of the Hlinka party on the 4th April, Dr. Josef Kirschbaum, the new secretary of the party, submitted draft proposals for a reform of the party's statutes based on authoritarian principles. I have been reliably informed that the idea of reform was under discussion as long ago as last November, but was shelved then. No doubt the weakening of the influence of the moderates after the events of last month has given the young political theorists in the party a free hand to experiment as they like. Full details of the new proposals have not been made public, but it appears that the Hlinka party is to be made into a 'State party', and the authoritarian principle is to be applied in appointments to positions in the party regional and municipal committees. It is evident that the promoters of these plans will lose no time in carrying the changes into effect, though they have hitherto been accepted only in principle by the party executive. Nominations to the municipal and regional committees are to be made after Easter, and their reorganisation is to be completed by the middle of May. The creation of corporations appears to be contemplated and special consideration will be given to the relationship between the party on the one hand and the press, trade unions and the Hlinka guard on the other. The party

secretariat is to be doubled, and it is clear that the Executive Committee intends to interfere very considerably in all spheres of public life. The draft embodying the reforms is due to be finished by the 1st May, and at the same time a draft Constitution for Slovakia, also based on authoritarian principles, is to be worked out. There is little reason to expect any serious opposition to these innovations from inside the party or even from those Slovaks who do not sympathise with Government. The German party, however, as I have learned on the best authority, opposed them when they were brought up last November and will certainly refuse approval now. Since the essence of Dr. Kirschbaum's proposals is that there should only be a single party in the State and that this party must exercise a direct influence on every form of activity in the Slovak State, a compromise seems practically impossible, for to exclude the German community in Slovakia from the jurisdiction of the State party would not only be a contradiction of the principles on which the State party was based but would render it ridiculous.

3. The attitude of the American Slovaks is always the subject of considerable attention in Slovakia, and the articles which have appeared recently in 'Slovak' are therefore worth mentioning. They are chiefly remarkable for their violent tone and for the frankly libellous manner in which they speak of one of M. Benes' present collaborators, M. Hurban, the last Czecho-Slovak Minister in Washington. It is plain that these articles, which will be read not only in this country but in America also, are an attempt to counteract the American propaganda of M. Benes, M. Jan Masaryk and M. Hurban. They assert, of course, that this propaganda is having and will have no influence on American Slovaks and in support of this contention quote from two manifestos issued by the Slovak League and the Association of Slovak Catholics, two Slovak organisations in the United States. Both these organisations repudiate the accusation that the Slovak leaders betrayed Slovakia and declare that they support Dr. Tiso's Government. But although both of them express mistrust of M. Benes, the manifesto of the Slovak League admits that the League was originally opposed to secession. This seems to be of considerable importance since the personality of the Czech leaders who are now fighting for a restoration of the Czecho-Slovak State is obviously of less importance than agreement on the principle of Czecho-Slovak unity.

Foreign Affairs

4. In spite of the fact that the settlement of the boundary dispute with Hungary was accomplished peacefully the Slovaks, both privately and officially, are extremely bitter. The semi-official newspapers, both before and after the signature of the Agreement in Budapest on the 4th April, have printed long articles protesting against the oppression of the Slovak minority in Hungary. The evil consequences of the Hungarian policy for Hungary herself are depicted in various ways. She is represented as having undertaken a difficult task when she is herself on the verge of a social and political crisis; she is reminded of the inevitable fate which overtook the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Czecho-Slovak Republic on account of their disregard of the

principle of self-determination; she is even warned that her own methods may one day be used against herself. Such phrases as 'to-day it is my turn, to-morrow it is yours', occur frequently, and in a leading article published in 'Slovak' the Deputy P. Carnogursky, who is chief of the Press Bureau, went so far as to write 'we shall wait for the best opportunity. We can only hammer into our heads and our children's heads the German phrase "Es kommt der Tag"'. In a broadcast speech on the 6th April M. Cernak, a former Minister of Education and now Slovak Minister to Berlin, went even further and said that the Slovaks would not abandon their claim to every child born of a Slovak mother, but would fight for revision so long as they had strength, and would never stop until all Slovaks had returned to their free motherland. Such characteristic marks of irredentist policy as the exaggeration of the size of the minority have appeared. For instance, the number of Slovaks in Hungary has risen in one week from over half a million to over three-quarters of a million. Most significant of all have been the recent anti-Hungarian speeches of M. Tuka and M. Mach, both of whom were in the past provided with Hungarian funds for their political activities.

It is, of course, one thing for the Slovaks to give utterance to their feelings in this way and quite another thing to devise a policy for the achievement of Slovak national unity. Before the final stage of the negotiations commenced at the beginning of last week the Slovak newspapers were declaring that Slovakia would demand compensation in the south for any concessions made on her eastern frontier. Judging from a conversation which I had with the Secretary of the German Legation here, I assume that it was the intention of the Slovak Government to claim compensation as a condition of agreeing to make the concessions required by the Hungarian Government, but, probably through German advice, this idea was dropped. On Sunday, the 2nd April, the leading article of 'Slovak' announced that 'those other political centres with which the Slovak Government are on friendly terms and which co-operate with them in international affairs', had no objection to the proposed adjustments, and had agreed that the Hungarian Government must show consideration for Slovakia's justifiable interest on her southern frontiers. But the interpretation of this passage given subsequently made it clear that the Slovaks' intention 'to insist on the modification of the southern frontier to make it coincide with the ethnographical boundary' would not be more than voiced at the negotiations, for after saying that the Slovak delegates would take this line at Budapest, the article at once proceeded to explain that the basis for discussion would be limited to the cession of strategically important ground near the railway from Uzhorod to Usek [*sic* ? Uzok]. It is evident that the intention of the Slovaks to demand compensation on the south, which was real enough during the preceding week, was dropped at the final negotiations last week, and one can only assume that this was the result of German pressure or, at least, lack of support. But the irredentist propaganda has continued all this week since the signature of the Agreement with Hungary and became particularly pointed during the Easter week-end. One semi-official newspaper wrote on Good Friday, the day fixed for the occupation of

the new boundary by the Hungarians, that 'on the day of greatest Christian sorrow Hungary takes from us many more thousands of inhabitants,' and then went on to predict a Slovak resurrection 'a happy Easter for all oppressed Slovaks'. It is hard to say on what foundation, if any, these hopes are based. Without German backing they are obviously unrealisable, and it seems reasonable to assume that the irredentist propaganda in the local press would not be so persistent if it were not inspired by Germany. While it must be clear now even to the Slovaks that Germany does not intend to back their claims by force at present, since she cannot afford to provoke a conflict with Hungary, it is possible that they are hoping that their object may be attained in some other way. A leading article in 'Slovak' published on the 7th April perhaps indicates the manner in which they hope to succeed. The article refers to certain 'reflections of responsible German publicists regarding the new settlement in Central Europe on a federal basis', which, it says, 'have appeared at a very suitable time. Only such a settlement in Central Europe can be the programme of international politics—a settlement by which small nations, too, would be able to live their lives according to their own will and in which it would not be possible for some to enrich themselves at the expense of others.'

Germany

5. Relations with Germany seem to be developing to the satisfaction of the Slovak Government, and though few details have been published regarding the results of the trade negotiations conducted in Berlin by M. Zvrskovec of the Slovak Ministry for Foreign Affairs, or of the discussions which Dr. Tiso had in Berlin last week at the invitation of von Ribbentrop, it is plain that the Slovak Government are content with the position. It is undeniable that the German occupation has caused much friction and considerable apprehension among the Slovak population. One of my acquaintances who is a high official stationed in the region of the Little Carpathians which has been occupied by the S.S. Verfügungstruppe has told me that the inhabitants of his district were very displeased when they had to billet the Germans even though the money offered to them was considerable. During a visit to Bezinok, a village near Bratislava with a mixed population, I had an opportunity of talking with the Slovak members of the Town Council and found that the subject of the German troops was a very unwelcome one. There has been much friction between the local officials and the German commanders. In Piestany the senior official of the administrative office has been removed because he offended the Germans. My acquaintance tells me that the demands of the Germans frequently conflict with the orders which he has received from his superiors in Bratislava. But the best proof of the existence of discontent are the repeated apologies and assurances which have been issued by the Slovak Press Bureau for publication in the newspapers. About a week ago M. Tuka broadcast a speech which was plainly intended to justify the Government's attitude to the general public. He promised that the German army would go when it was no longer needed—a rather extra-

ordinary promise in view of the military terms of the German-Slovak Treaty. Certain concessions have been made—for instance, the German customs houses established in the occupied areas of Slovakia were abolished at the end of March—and on the whole it looks as though the Slovak Government were prepared to put up with the present state of affairs in spite of the obvious drawbacks.

6. Negotiations on military matters took place on the 4th April between the Slovak Ministers of Finance, Economics and War and some German staff officers. The only information in the press about the subject of these negotiations was to the effect that they had been concerned with the removal of war material purchased by the German Government from the Czecho-Slovak Government which had been stored in Slovakia. I have heard privately that the secret reserves of petrol near Bratislava and Povazska Bystrica were entirely removed by the Germans some time ago. Information regarding the intentions of the Germans in military matters is not very easy to obtain, but several interesting facts have already come to my knowledge. Work has begun on fortifications in the area of the Little Carpathians, and it is now impossible to enter the area without the permission of the military commander. The Slovak troops are apparently vacating their barracks to make way for the Germans. One of the results of Dr. Tiso's visit to Berlin last week was the decision to send a German military adviser to Bratislava 'to settle questions relating to war material'. A mixed German-Slovak Commission is also to be appointed to deal with these matters. It looks as though the recent decision of the German and former Czecho-Slovak Governments to exempt Czechs in Germany and Germans in Czecho-Slovakia from the obligation to perform military service would not be copied here. I have learned from one of Karmasin's principal advisers that the Germans in Slovakia will not be exempt from military service. This perhaps justifies the assumption that the Germans do not intend to neglect the Slovak army, but will give some attention to it as a possible ally. In this connexion the recent declaration of M. Tuka at a banquet given in honour of a German general is of interest. He said that in the event of Slovakia being obliged to take part in a war to defend European civilisation, she would fight on the side of Germany.

7. In spite of the scanty information available regarding the result of the recent economic and financial negotiations it is evident that the Slovaks are satisfied with the terms which they have received. The wording of the communiqué issued after Dr. Tiso's return from Berlin last week was particularly friendly to Germany. The fact that statistics regarding Slovakia's trade are almost non-existent makes it difficult to form any precise judgment about the general economic situation. I understand, however, that in the past Slovakia's principal markets were the Historic Provinces of Bohemia and Moravia, three-fifths of the entire Slovak output being absorbed there. I had the opportunity of discussing the economic position with the Economic Adviser of the Slovak Government, and learned from him that the prospects are not unfavourable. It appears that there will not be many great changes in the trade relations with the Protectorate, and the establishment of equality

between the crown and the new Slovak monetary unit will help to avoid unnecessary dislocation. Slovakia's trade with countries which have a free currency is estimated at 260 million crowns' worth of exports annually and 240 million crowns' worth of imports. The totals are not big, but if, as expected, there is a small surplus of exports the position of Slovak currency in the world's money market will be upheld. There seems to be no fear that Germany will commandeer the small surplus of foreign exchange. During the first negotiations in Berlin which were conducted by M. Zvrskovec, an arrangement seems to have been made whereby the exchange of goods between Slovakia and Germany was balanced. The Economic Adviser to the Slovak Government, who was a member of the Delegation, told me that the Germans wished to take a quantity of goods far in excess of what Slovakia could hope to absorb from Germany. The Slovaks feared that in consequence a large frozen balance would accumulate in Germany, so they asked for and obtained a restriction of German purchases. Since Slovak trade with the Protectorate almost balances—there is, in fact, a small adverse balance—it will be seen that Slovakia's general economic situation is not unsatisfactory.

8. Another difficult problem settled by the Berlin negotiations was the question of the distribution of the property and assets belonging to the former Czecho-Slovak Government. The Slovaks claim a share of $17\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., and in the communiqué issued after Dr. Tiso's return it was declared that 'the distribution would be effected with the participation of Germany in such a way that Slovakia's share would not be reduced'. A mixed Slovak-German committee is to be set up to deal with the economic and financial problems arising out of the settlement.

9. It is obvious that concessions made to Slovakia by Germany have got to be paid for, and the statement of Dr. Tiso, in an interview given to a correspondent of 'Slovak' just after his return from Berlin, shows clearly how the policy of Slovakia in external affairs will be conducted in future. Dr. Tiso said: 'What is, indeed, quite natural, but may surprise the general public, is that in the future also such conversations (about economic and financial matters), even when they concern Bohemia and Moravia, will be carried on through Berlin and only through Berlin.' The consequences seem to be of considerable political importance, namely, the weakening of Slovakia's connexion with the Czechs, and the subordination of her relations with the rest of the world to Berlin's dictates.

10. It would probably be a mistake to attach too much importance to certain differences of view which have arisen between the Government and the German party, but they are worth recording. The old dispute about the census of the 31st December, 1938, has revived, and the German newspaper 'Grenzboten' has somewhat rudely attacked the findings of the Government's committee of investigation which reported that the German party's complaints were mostly unfounded so that their charges that the census was inaccurate fall to the ground. Friction also arose over a law restricting the practice of the legal profession. It was aimed against the Jews, but, in fact, through bad drafting, it hit the Germans much harder. The Government

have agreed to revise it. More serious is the trouble which has arisen over the interview given to the correspondent of a local Hungarian newspaper by M. Mach, Chief of Propaganda. He declared that all political parties would, according to the proposed reforms described in paragraph 3 above, be merged in a single State party. Realising his mistake almost immediately he acted as censor of his own utterances, and through the Propaganda Department ordered that publication of the imprudent sentences should be stopped. The German party has, nevertheless, issued a strong protest in which it is affirmed that Mach's proposals are contrary to the assurances given to Karmasin by Dr. Tiso last November and are therefore unacceptable. The vagaries of Slovak politicians seem to cause some amusement to the leaders of the German party, but since their official public reaction is always a strong one, one must reckon that the German community in Slovakia takes the mistakes of the Slovaks rather seriously, and it is quite certain that the Slovak politicians themselves must feel resentment when they are so abruptly checked in their courses from time to time.

I have, &c.,
P. PARES

No. 44

Sir R. Hoare (Bucharest) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 13, 9.30 a.m.)
No. 115 Telegraphic [C 5147/3356/18]

BUCHAREST, April 12, 1939, 8.0 p.m.

Your telegram No. 58 to Moscow.¹

Though it is probably superfluous in view of the last paragraph I offer comment that statement of the Soviet Ambassador regarding Roumanian attitude as recorded in paragraph 6² is at the best disingenuous. One of the courses [*sic* ? causes] which led to the downfall of M. Titulescu was the belief here that he was trying to drive Roumania into an alliance with Soviet Russia.

2. I have reported in my telegram No. 94³ statement of the King that in case of need the Roumanian Government would *accept* Russian help and I have no doubt that if desired I could obtain formal assurance on this point, but to make Anglo-French help conditional on acceptance of Soviet help (condition which would no doubt be duly advertised in Soviet press) would be disastrous here and presumably at Warsaw.

3. Minister for Foreign Affairs repeated this morning language recorded in my telegram No. 110⁴ and said that Roumanian Secretary-General had

¹ Not printed. See No. 42, note 1.

² i.e. the statement recorded in paragraph 8 of No. 42, that M. Beck's pro-German influence had affected the Roumanian attitude.

³ See Volume IV of this Series, No. 602.

⁴ No. 41.

reported that you were 'sympathetic' to his views and that in later conversation with French President of the Council the latter had accepted them and had undertaken to represent to His Majesty's Government desirability of Anglo-French guarantee of Roumanian integrity whether or not similar guarantee was given by Poland. I told Minister for Foreign Affairs that I understood from your telegram No. 106⁵ that you still desired Polish guarantee.

4. Minister for Foreign Affairs then told me that the Roumanian Government had had plain intimation from the German Government that they were not interested in Hungarian claims and were ready to give Roumania a political guarantee (in return I presume for some *quid pro quo* in the economic sphere). He evidently fears that the matter will be strongly pressed when he is in Berlin on April 18 and he feels his hands would be greatly strengthened if he were able to confront Germans with a guarantee spontaneously given to [*sic* ? by] Great Britain and France to assist Roumania to resist aggression from any quarter and if he could therefore logically (even if rather naively) suggest similar guarantee from Germany it would do much to promote peaceful development in the Balkans.

5. Minister for Foreign Affairs then reverted to his visit to Istanbul⁶ and said that the President of the Council had asked him to read to me an agreed record of conversation with Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs. He did not do so yesterday because Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs had told him that he wished the initiative in discussing Turkish attitude . . .⁷ Great Power . . .⁷ to come from Great Britain and neither directly nor indirectly from Turkey. General sense was that the two Ministers for Foreign Affairs were in complete agreement that Roumanian countries must support Anglo-French though (? I fear) neutrality was not excluded and they would use all their influence to ensure solidarity of the Balkans.

6. I confidentially conclude that the purpose of this . . .⁷ Turkish . . .⁷ is to give His Majesty's Government concrete evidence that full and immediate support of Turkish forces is available if they are adequately reinforced in Eastern Mediterranean.

7. I cannot trace your telegram 81 to Belgrade⁸ but Sir R. Campbell's reply to [in] telegram No. 77⁹ seems to indicate that the views of Yugoslav Government are similar to those of the Roumanian Government as to the necessity of the utmost prudence on the part of minor Powers.

Repeated to Moscow, Warsaw, Berlin, Angora, Belgrade, Athens and Sofia.

⁵ Not printed. See No. 37, note 1.

⁶ For M. Gafencu's account of his visit to Istanbul at Easter, see No. 278.

⁷ This paragraph and paragraph 6 were received in a corrupt state. They were subsequently corrected to read ' . . . the initiative in discussing Turkish attitude in the event of Great Power war to come from Great Britain and neither directly nor indirectly from Turkey. General sense was that the two Ministers for Foreign Affairs were in complete agreement that the two countries must support Anglo-French, though initial neutrality was not excluded, and they would use all their influence to ensure solidarity of the Balkans. I confidently conclude that the purpose of this breach of Turkish confidence . . . '

⁸ No. 103.

⁹ Not printed.

No. 45

Mr. Troutbeck (Prague) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 13, 9.30 a.m.)
No. 214 Telegraphic [C 5142/13/18]

PRAGUE, April 12, 1939, 8.0 p.m.

My French colleague informed me today of a number of reports which had reached him in the past day or so but which he could not authenticate. In some cases as indicated below they are to some extent confirmed through Air Attaché from a source he considers reliable. The reports are as follows:—

1. Troop concentrations continue in Eastern Moravia and in Slovakia (see Bratislava telegram of April 6¹ and my telegrams Nos. 200¹ and 207¹).

2. The civil population is being evacuated from Mährisch-Ostrau and Olmütz. The Air Attaché learns that there has been trouble in Mährisch-Ostrau between the Czech population and German authorities but he has received no confirmation of the story of evacuation.

3. The railways in Protectorate have been placed in a state of 'alerte' and sealed orders delivered to officials in charge of main stations only to be opened anywhere on receipt of special instructions.

4. Schools have been requisitioned as military hospitals in a number of towns in Protectorate. Air Attaché has heard the same story and also that a number of wounded German soldiers have been attended in one of these hospitals following civil disorders.

5. Second armoured division has been moved from Prague to Silesia. As to this Air Attaché has heard that the general policy now is to replace troops in Bohemia by S.S. and Gestapo and that three divisions had already left, some in the direction of Innsbruck and others to form part of a general concentration on German-French frontier. Air Attaché has not heard of any troop concentrations against Poland.

Repeated to Berlin, Warsaw and Paris.

¹ Not printed.

No. 46

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 13, 9.30 a.m.)
No. 105 Telegraphic [C 5179/54/18]

WARSAW, April 12, 1939, 9.56 p.m.

My telegram No. 34 Saving.¹

I told Minister for Foreign Affairs today that I understood the Polish Ambassador at Berlin had come here recently after interviews with the German authorities and asked him whether, as was reported in the press, there

¹ No. 26.

was any new development as regards Danzig. M. Beck stated categorically that there was no new development of any kind. M. Lipski had not seen Herr von Ribbentrop lately and had seen Herr Weizsäcker on a matter not connected with Danzig. German Ambassador who is at present in Berlin is to return here tomorrow and is to ask for interview with M. Beck and he cannot of course say what instructions he may have but at the present moment there could not be said to be any change as regards Danzig or any other questions with Germany. Further there had been no indications of German troop movements of a disquieting nature.

Repeated to Berlin and Danzig.

No. 47

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 13, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 104 Telegraphic [C 5180/3356/18]

WARSAW, April 12, 1939, 9.57 p.m.

Your telegram No. 88.¹

Minister for Foreign Affairs informs me that he lost no time in instructing Polish Ambassador Bucharest to take matter up with Roumanian Government. Roumanian Ambassador who is now in Bucharest returns tomorrow and he is to see him immediately to ascertain present views of Roumanian Government. Should M. Gafencu pass through . . .² on his way to Berlin at beginning of next week M. Beck might perhaps arrange a meeting with him in order to have a personal discussion. At any rate he fully appreciates necessity of expediting negotiations and will inform me as soon as there is anything concrete to report.

Minister for Foreign Affairs further told me that in view of unsatisfactory reports as to attitude of Hungarian Government towards Roumania and possibility of further Hungarian mobilization he has instructed Polish Minister Budapest to make urgent representations to Hungarian Government urging them to avoid taking any military measures which might be interpreted by Roumanian Government as unfriendly and warning them that Polish Government would take a serious view of any action of this kind.

In general M. Beck was very friendly and expressed greatest satisfaction at outcome of his visit to London. He particularly appreciated practical atmosphere of the discussions and comprehension shown for Poland's difficulties. My French colleague also had an unusually friendly discussion with him this morning.

Repeated to Bucharest, Budapest and Berlin.

¹ No. 36.

² The text is here uncertain.

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 12, 1939*

Sir,

The French Ambassador asked to see me this afternoon, and said that he had hoped to be in a position to give me a draft of a declaration that the French Government expected to make to-morrow in Paris. This, however, was not yet in his possession, but he hoped to be able to let me have it in the course of the evening.

2. Without official instructions from his Government, he thought he could none the less say that they were thinking rather more of Roumania than of Greece, and they would have liked our two statements, if possible, to have been on similar lines. He recognised, however, that the relations of the French had always been more close with Roumania than ours had, just as the relations of Great Britain with Greece had also always been closer than those of France and Greece.

3. I told the Ambassador what we were doing in regard to the Roumanian side of the problem, and explained to him how great was the importance in this matter that we attached to the attitude of Turkey. We were accordingly approaching the Turkish Government on the wider line of pointing out that any further aggressive act by Germany or Italy was likely to involve general war, that, on such a supposition, this war was bound to involve the Mediterranean, and that, therefore, in any war into which Italy might enter, it was of the greatest importance that Turkey and Great Britain should act together.¹

4. For the immediate problem of Roumania also, it was of evident importance that Turkey should be willing to give active co-operation, and, for this reason, I thought it very desirable, if possible, that no final declaration should be made about Roumania until we had more information as to the attitude of the Turkish Government.

5. M. Corbin asked whether our attitude in this respect was due to M. Beck's desire to pursue conversations with Roumania or to the inaccessibility of Roumania. I told him that to some extent it was the result of both these considerations, with the rider that, instead of the phrase 'inaccessibility of Roumania,' I should lay the emphasis on the importance of Turkish co-operation. M. Corbin repeated that he was not certain whether the French declaration to be made to-morrow would include a reference to Roumania, or, if so, what the reference would be, but he fancied the French Government would be disposed to feel that to omit reference to Roumania would be to place her in the unenviable position of an unprotected target. I assured M. Corbin that I fully appreciated the urgency of clearing the Roumanian position, and we were sparing no effort to this end. I had sent a telegram last night to Warsaw, urging our Ambassador to do everything that he could to

¹ See No. 138.

accelerate M. Beck's action,² and I proposed to speak to the Polish Ambassador myself in the same sense later in the afternoon.³

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

² The reference appears to be to No. 36.

³ See No. 50.

No. 49

*Aide-mémoire from the French Ambassador (Received April 13)*¹

[C 5473/3356/18]

AMBASSADE DE FRANCE A LONDRES, le 12 avril, 1939

Le Conseil des Ministres français a pris au cours de sa réunion de ce matin la décision d'assurer à la Roumanie la même assistance qu'à la Pologne. En prenant cette position le Gouvernement français a estimé qu'il importait de mettre fin à l'incertitude qui pouvait subsister, tant à Berlin qu'à Bucarest, sur la détermination de la France de s'opposer à toute action de force allemande entreprise en vue d'assurer au Reich les ressources naturelles qui lui font défaut et que l'assujettissement de la Roumanie lui livrerait. Cette incertitude, que risquerait d'accroître encore les assurances que la France et la Grande-Bretagne ont données ou se préparent à donner à la Pologne et à la Grèce, ne peut qu'encourager d'une part le Gouvernement allemand dans la poursuite des projets qu'il a tout au moins envisagés, et justifier, d'autre part, les hésitations de la Roumanie elle-même à préparer sa résistance à la pression exercée sur elle par la politique de l'Axe.

L'Ambassadeur de Grande-Bretagne a donné connaissance ce matin au Gouvernement français de la déclaration que le Premier Ministre se propose de faire demain matin aux Communes pour affirmer dans des termes analogues à ceux qu'il a employés pour la Pologne la décision du Gouvernement britannique de prêter assistance à la Grèce. Sir Eric Phipps ayant demandé si le Gouvernement français participerait éventuellement à cette assistance, il lui a été répondu affirmativement. M. Chamberlain se propose, dans ces conditions, de faire état publiquement de cet accord, ainsi que de celui de la Turquie, si l'accord de ce dernier pays peut être acquis en temps utile. La déclaration que le Gouvernement français fera dans la journée de demain mentionnera l'engagement pris d'accord avec le Gouvernement anglais à l'égard de la Grèce, mais aussi, en toute hypothèse, l'engagement de la France à l'égard de la Roumanie. Il importerait donc grandement, pour souligner ouvertement la solidarité et la synchronisation de l'action des deux Gouvernements, que ceux-ci puissent faire état d'un engagement égal vis-à-vis de la Roumanie, et qu'en conséquence, sans attendre plus longtemps la conclusion d'une entente complémentaire polono-roumaine, la France et l'Angleterre assurent dès demain la Roumanie de la même assistance qu'elles se sont engagées l'une et l'autre à prêter à la Pologne. La décision des deux

¹ This *aide-mémoire* was communicated by the French Ambassador on April 13. See also Nos. 66 and 144.

Gouvernements pourrait dans ce cas trouver son expression publique sous la forme d'une déclaration commune qui s'inspirerait de la déclaration limitée à la Grèce qui a été remise à Paris ce matin par Sir Eric Phipps.²

L'Ambassadeur de France a été chargé d'insister sur les avantages que présenterait, dans les circonstances actuelles, la proclamation par les deux gouvernements, en termes analogues, de leur détermination commune, alors que l'absence dans la déclaration anglaise de toute référence à la Roumanie laisserait supposer à tort que la Grande-Bretagne se désintéresse du sort de cette puissance et affaiblirait d'autant la portée de la déclaration française et des conséquences qu'il est permis d'en attendre. Toute divergence supposée entre les engagements respectifs de la France et de la Grande-Bretagne ne peut qu'encourager en effet les dirigeants de l'Axe à spéculer sur l'existence entre les deux pays de différences de vues plus profondes et les encourager à des entreprises auxquelles seule l'affirmation publique d'une solidarité franco-anglaise totale peut les amener aujourd'hui à renoncer.

² For the instructions to Sir E. Phipps in this connexion, see No. 127.

No. 50

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw)

No. 215 [C 5262/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 12, 1939*

Sir,

The Polish Ambassador called this afternoon at my request, when I took occasion to say that I was anxious to know whether M. Beck had made any progress with his consultation of the Roumanian Government which he had, during his visit to London, promised to undertake on his return. I told the Ambassador that His Majesty's Government attached very great importance to this, and I asked him to inform M. Beck that we hoped he was making progress, and that we were relying on him to keep us duly informed. I hoped that the Ambassador would add a representation in this sense in his own name also.

2. Count Raczynski replied that he had no information from Warsaw on this subject, but that he fully appreciated how important it was that progress should be made.

3. I then took occasion to inform the Ambassador of the action we were taking in consequence of the recent Italian move in Albania. We hoped to make a declaration in Parliament on the 13th April covering the case of Greece. The French Government were willing to associate themselves with this declaration. The Turkish Government were also in sympathy, but we should probably not be able to say any more about the Turkish attitude than that we were in consultation with them.

4. We were also in consultation with the Turkish Government in regard to the attitude which they would adopt in the event of any threat, direct or indirect, to Roumania. Turkey was, geographically, in a key position so far as Roumania was concerned.

5. We were, in addition, in communication with the Turkish Government on lines similar to those of our conversations with Colonel Beck. The whole problem of the expansionist aims of the Axis Powers seemed to us to be a single problem. If there was an attack on Poland or Holland or Greece or Roumania, both Germany and Italy would probably be involved, no matter which of the two it was that dealt the first attack. The Mediterranean would become a theatre of war, and the Mediterranean Powers would become involved. It was therefore desirable that as many Powers as possible should work in association in order to meet this menace. We hoped to receive an answer from the Turkish Government in the near future.¹ We hoped also that the Polish Government would see the situation in the same light as ourselves, and would not disagree with the line we were taking.

6. I told the Ambassador that, in addition to the question of Roumania, we should also be glad to hear what attitude the Polish Government would adopt as regards the other question which had been left for further consideration after Colonel Beck's visit, namely, what the action of Poland would be in the event of our being involved in war with Germany in defence of the smaller Western European Powers. The Ambassador took note of this, and recalled that M. Beck had thought it likely that Poland would in that event come to our assistance, though he had not been in a position to commit the Polish Government.

7. He asked whether we had given any thought to the question of future procedure. I said that when we had cleared up the question of Roumania and of the minor Western Powers, our idea would be to reduce the agreement to writing. We agreed that once the main principles were settled, the text could perhaps be elaborated through the diplomatic channel.

8. The Ambassador asked whether I had discussed matters any further with the Soviet Government. I told him that I had seen the Soviet Ambassador the day before.² I had not given him any details of the confidential arrangement between His Majesty's Government and the Polish Government, but he knew, of course, that we were working for a permanent agreement, that the question of Roumania required further consideration, and that no decision had been reached on this point. He had not been particularly helpful.

9. Count Raczynski said that if the Soviet Government wished to be helpful, they had no occasion to impose political conditions upon Poland and Roumania. So long as Poland and Roumania existed, they acted as a buffer between Germany and the Soviet Union, and therefore as a protection to the latter, particularly since it was certain that they would defend themselves.

10. I told Count Raczynski that when the Soviet Ambassador had criticised our attitude, I had observed that the difficulties of which he complained were not of our making, but were inherent in the situation. The best thing that the Soviet Government could do would be to remove the anxieties of their neighbours. M. Maisky's reply to this had been to suggest that, before under-

¹ For these questions, see Chapter II.

² See No. 42.

taking to come to the help of Poland and Roumania, we should insist, as a condition, that they should come to an arrangement with the Soviet Union. I had told him that I could not feel this to be a very helpful contribution.

11. I then said that in addition to the points I had already raised, there was a further one which I approached with some hesitation. I had heard from some source or other—I could not now remember what it was, but it was certainly not from Your Excellency—that the Polish Government might be encouraged by their recent agreement with His Majesty's Government to become unreasonable in their dealings with Germany. I hoped that this would not be so, and indeed I was satisfied that this would not be M. Beck's attitude. I had also heard from the same source that there was some foundation for recent German complaints about the treatment of the German minority in Upper Silesia, and I had been exhorted to do what I could with the Polish Government to ensure that no such cause for complaint should be given.

12. The Ambassador said that he was not sure how he could convey these observations to M. Beck. He was certain that M. Beck, as he had assured us during his visit, would make the greatest efforts to avoid a deterioration in German-Polish relations, subject to the double proviso that Poland could not accept any settlement imposed upon her by threat of force, or any settlement incompatible with her independence. It was obviously in Poland's own interest to maintain the best possible relations with Germany.

13. I assured the Ambassador that in passing on to him the information which I had received, I did not, in any sense, make it my own.

14. The Ambassador said that such rumours were natural enough in the present state of excitement. It looked as though the German press had received orders to be provocative to Poland.

15. I asked him whether he had any reason to anticipate trouble from Germany. The Ambassador replied that he had not. There were stories that Germany was presenting demands to Poland. There might be something in this story, but he had no confirmation.

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

No. 51

Letter from Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin) to Mr. Strang
[C 5176/11/18]

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, April 12, 1939

With reference to our despatches Nos. 223¹ and 412² of February 17 and April 3 respectively, you will remember that I sent you privately under cover of my letter of March 30³ a memorandum by the Military Attaché in which

¹ See Volume IV of this Series, No. 117.

² Ibid., No. 609.

³ Ibid., Appendix V.

he expressed the view that purely from the military aspect the present moment was the best to go to war. I hinted at the time that this view was not shared by the other Service Attachés and I now enclose copy of a memorandum by the Air Attaché in which he points out that from the air point of view we should for the moment postpone a trial of strength with Germany.

It is of course outside my province to make suggestions as to the desirability or otherwise of His Majesty's Government forcing the issue with Germany, if such a course is regarded as necessary, now or at a later date, but I feel that you should be made aware of the Air Attaché's views in his technical capacity. His reference in the first paragraph of his memorandum to a despatch which Kennard had received from Berlin is not accurate. It was not a despatch but a communication from the Military Attaché to his colleague in Warsaw, which I assume is a copy of his memorandum enclosed in my letter of March 30.

Yours ever,

GEORGE OGILVIE-FORBES

ENCLOSURE IN No. 51

BERLIN, *April 6, 1939*

Chargé d'Affaires.

As you know I returned last evening from a brief visit to Poland¹ during which I had an opportunity to discuss the situation with a number of different people in Warsaw, and on my way back paid a visit to Danzig, where, owing to the kindness of Mr. Sheppard [*sic*] our Consul-General, I was able to get an insight into the local situation. During my stay in Warsaw the Ambassador showed me a despatch which he had received from Berlin which expressed the opinion that, from the army point of view, the present was a most favourable opportunity for a preventive war to be undertaken against further German ambitions, and that it would even be to our advantage to provoke such a war. The Ambassador asked me whether I subscribed to that view and I was bound to say that, from the air point of view from my knowledge of conditions in both Poland and Germany, I was on the contrary entirely opposed to it. I think you may like to have my reasons for opposing the army view although I do not think our difference of opinion is likely to be of any great importance for I feel fairly sure, from what I saw and heard during my recent visit, that there must be a clash between Poland and Germany over the subject of Danzig and the Corridor in the very near future.

2. Our Consul-General in Danzig said that he had been quite convinced from information he had obtained that it was intended that the German fleet on its return from Memel on or about 25th March should pay a visit to Danzig and that the return of the Free City to Germany would then be announced. Mr. Sheppard has explained his reasons for this view in a despatch² which I brought with me to Berlin yesterday. The reason why this

¹ Group Captain Vachell was Air Attaché both at Berlin and at Warsaw.

² See No. 6.

plan was not proceeded with was because Poland had been prepared and had massed troops on the Danzig border; if the German fleet had visited Danzig that week-end it would have found the Poles were masters of the situation. The plan was, therefore, changed and it was decided that at its meeting on the following Saturday the Senate should vote for a return to Germany. All the special correspondents moved down from Berlin to Danzig in preparation for the event, but on Friday, 31st March, Mr. Chamberlain announced that Britain and France would support Poland if she were attacked by Germany. Hitler required time to consider this new situation and so the clash was again avoided, but I am afraid that it has only been postponed for a short time, probably about two months, before which time the wet state of the country will hinder the movement of troops.

3. In conversation with the Polish Military Attaché in Berlin some months ago he had expressed the view that there was no reason why Poland and Germany should go to war about the Corridor for it would not be impossible to come to some arrangement satisfactory to both parties. This seemed to me to be the commonsense view, but from what I saw and was told during my recent visit it seems to me that any lasting arrangement is quite impracticable. Danzig in all but name is a purely German city, which is being steadily and now quite rapidly ruined, partly by Polish and partly by German action. Poland has steadily diverted trade from Danzig to her new port Gdynia even when these measures had no economic justification. At the same time the Nazi party in Danzig, by its treatment of the Jews and other measures, has driven capital away from the city and at the same time has embarked on an enormously expensive building programme for hostels and other party institutions which the city's resources are quite unable to pay for. Without any propaganda it would be quite simple to arrange a genuine appeal from the Danzig authorities to Germany to take over control and get the city out of its difficulties. But if Danzig were to return to Germany the geographical position of Gdynia and the rest of the Corridor from a military point of view would be quite untenable and could only remain in Polish occupation as long as Germany chose to allow it, which would obviously not be for very long. Gdynia is a most remarkable port, its shops and houses being almost as repulsively ugly as those of Tel-a-Viv, but its docks, with warehouses, equipment of cranes, railway sidings, and so forth, are significant and it is almost unbelievable that so much can have been achieved in so short a time. When the state of Poland was reborn in 1919 it was realised that she could not continue to exist without access to the sea and so the unsatisfactory arrangement of the Corridor was introduced, but, even if this were not so, it would be well nigh impossible for the Poles to contemplate the surrender of such a magnificent achievement as the creation of the Port of Gdynia. Every Pole to whom I spoke took it as a matter of course that the questions of Danzig and the Corridor were inseparable, and that if Germany made any move against them, Poland would fight even if she had to fight single handed.

4. In view of our recent declaration of policy Poland will not have to fight single-handed, but it seems to me that she will have to fight in the very

near future, and the outlook for her is pretty desperate. As I explained in a Memorandum which I gave to the Ambassador in Warsaw,³ it is a mistake to consider Poland's air situation apart from her army. The air forces of bigger nations such as Germany, France, Italy or Great Britain, may achieve an effect on the course of a war as independent from the effect achieved by the forces engaged on land as is achieved by the operations of their fleets. But the Polish Air Force should not be considered separately from the army of which it forms a part in the same way that its engineers or armoured cars do. The Polish Air Force is organised and equipped for its task of helping the army to resist invasion. As such it is quite reasonably efficient, but it suffers from the drawback of inadequate equipment as does probably every branch of the army. Polish aircraft are of quite good design and construction, but owing to shortage of money it is only possible to re-equip units at fairly long intervals. The bomber squadrons of which there are only four (about 50 aircraft) are now being equipped with quite a good type of medium bomber which compares not unfavourably with the German Dornier 17 or our Bristol Blenheim, though rather slower than both. Fighter squadrons cannot hope to get an improved type until next year, and the present type of Polish fighter is hopelessly outclassed by every type of German aircraft in service. The same remark applies to each type of Polish aircraft; apart from the superior numbers of German aircraft that they are sure to find opposed to them, their inferior performance would give them no change [*sic* ? chance] no matter how gallant the crews might be. Given financial assistance by France and Great Britain it may be possible to effect a fairly marked improvement in quite a short space of time, but short of providing completely new equipment of foreign construction, I doubt whether any marked advance can be made during the present year. From the point of view of the Polish Air Force, and I think probably from the point of view of the rest of the Polish army, it would be a distinct advantage if breathing space could be given in which to allow the financial assistance to take effect. If, as seems likely, Poland is obliged to fight during the next few months I foresee that the air force will not be the least efficient part of the Polish army, but that the latter will be up against such superior forces that, gallantly as no doubt it will fight, it will be forced back on the defensive when and where the Germans wish and the decision will have to be reached in another theatre.

5. The relative air strengths of Great Britain and Germany were discussed in a Memorandum dated 15th February, 1939,⁴ which I wrote for the Ambassador, and I then stated that I thought that Germany's relative superiority in the air would be greater during the next few months than for some years to come, and that from the air point of view the most dangerous time would be passed by next October. This view may be somewhat modified by Germany's acquisition of the Czecho-Slovakian Air Force and aircraft manufacturing resources, which I dealt with in a memorandum dated 28th March,⁵ but that will not be possible to decide until further information

³ See No. 12, enclosure 2.

⁴ See Volume IV of this Series, No. 117.

⁵ Ibid., No. 609.

becomes available. I think I can say quite definitely that good though the progress which has been made in increasing Great Britain's output of aircraft may be, it must be decidedly to our advantage to avoid becoming involved in war during the coming summer months.

6. I have no first hand knowledge of the French aircraft situation other than that which I was able to glean during my visit to the Paris Aeronautical Exhibition last November, but at that time it was undoubtedly desperately bad. Good progress has no doubt been made since, and production arrangements have, I understand, undergone radical changes, but I am quite sure that it would be of very great advantage to the French Air Force to wait for some months before it is required to be put to the test in war. Great Britain started to expand her air force later than Germany and France started later still; we may not be overtaking Germany's output of aircraft, but there is no doubt that the disparity is steadily growing less, and it must be to our advantage at the present time to defer a trial of strength.

7. I do not propose to go into the economic situation in detail, but it is common knowledge that Germany's present policy is imposing an immense strain on the country's financial system. Hitler keeps repeating that he is not afraid to continue the competition in armaments, but the fact is that whereas the effect of devoting so much of the country's resources to the provision of armaments is apparent in every walk of life in Germany, there are to be found in Great Britain few if any similar signs, distasteful though the provision of these huge armed forces may be. It is by no means improbable that Hitler, in spite of all he has said and written to the contrary, will resort to war in order to put an end to the impossible position in which his economic policy has landed him. But surely it would be stupid for us to terminate this competition which Germany is quite obviously losing by provoking a war which appears to be her only possible chance of finding a successful solution.

8. I do not attempt to argue that from the army point of view, where the important factors may be the counting of heads and the length of frontiers to be attacked or defended, there may not be convincing reasons for provoking a war against Germany as quickly as possible, but from the air point of view there are very definite advantages in deferring a trial of strength. There are also probably strong arguments for getting Germany involved in war before she has had time to settle affairs in her newly acquired territory and before she has been able to reap any economic advantage from it or from further ventures in South Eastern Europe. But I am assured that the German working man, as opposed to the white collar brigade and hordes of minor officials, is by no means enamoured of the successive Hitler ventures. The German working man interprets everything in terms of his stomach and with each successful venture which has been hailed with such enthusiasm by press and wireless propaganda his own conditions of life have steadily depreciated. Neither the acquisition of Czecho-Slovakia nor any other venture can effect a rapid improvement in these conditions and the dissatisfaction of the German working classes seems certain to grow steadily. If Hitler himself provokes a war it would in spite of propaganda be highly unpopular in Germany, but

if we were to provoke a war we should be doing the one thing which could unite the people solidly behind the present régime.

J. L. VACHELL
Group Captain, Air Attaché

No. 52

Sir W. Seeds (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 13, 9.30 a.m.)
No. 61 Telegraphic [C 5144/3356/18]

MOSCOW, April 13, 1939, 2.32 a.m.

Your telegram No. 58¹ last paragraph.

I venture to point out that it is difficult to see how the Soviet Government can effectively contribute towards a solution of our difficulties so long as the countries where the Soviet contribution could be effective resolutely refuse to consider any idea of co-operating with or even consulting this country.

2. Moreover an obvious temptation to the Soviet Government to sit back and do nothing is presented by the situation which is developing. If all goes well with our negotiations, Germany will in case of war have to fight on two fronts simultaneously: it is therefore agreeable [*sic* ? arguable] either that Poland and Roumania will in such a war provide a bulwark for this country or else that even should Germany overrun those two countries she would halt at the Soviet frontier rather than add the Soviet Union to her Western enemies.

3. While not going all the way with those foreign observers who believe that the situation is now developing [? into] the Soviet idea of a war where all capitalist Europe will destroy itself for the benefit of Soviet Russia, it does seem to me that as things are now this country can quite properly be tempted to stand aloof and in case of war confine its advertised support of the victims of aggression to the profitable business of selling supplies to the latter. Such an attitude would be consonant with Stalin's known caution and of (*sic*) refraining from pulling the chestnuts out of the fire.

4. I am bound however to point to a possible danger arising either now or in case of war at the stage where Germany had reached the Soviet frontier through Poland, namely an offer by Germany to the Soviet Union of Bessarabia and parts of Poland not to mention perhaps Estonia and Latvia. I do not myself think the danger is more than 'possible' as in this too I am not amongst those who seem incurably suspicious of this country.

5. But I do emphatically agree with the Russian Ambassador in the hope that some means may be found by His Majesty's Government to prevail on Poland and Roumania to accept the idea of some form of Soviet military assistance. Such acceptance to be notified *now* and not put off until an outbreak of war when this country might be tempted to follow counsels of prudence or worse.

Repeated to Berlin, Bucharest, Paris and Warsaw.

¹ Not printed. See No. 42, note 1. The last paragraph of the telegram corresponded to that of the despatch printed as No. 42.

No. 53

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 13, 11.0 a.m.)
No. 164 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 5137/3356/18]

PARIS, April 13, 1939

My telegram No. 163.¹

I have strongly urged all considerations set forth in your unnumbered telegram of last night² on M. Daladier and M. Bonnet and left them a copy.

M. Daladier takes a diametrically opposite point of view, borne out, as he declares, by statements made by the Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Roumanian Minister for Foreign Affairs to the French Ambassador, to the effect that Turkey will only guarantee Roumania if France and Great Britain first of all do so publicly. M. Daladier insists on including Roumania in his declarations [*sic*] today and feels that this is the best and indeed the only way of averting a general conflagration. If this be not done at once Germany will present an ultimatum to Roumania within a few hours and we shall again be faced with [a] *fait accompli*. He does not believe Poland is now really threatened by Germany, who means to get Roumanian oil without which she cannot wage war for more than a few months.

M. Daladier addresses strongest appeal to you and the Prime Minister and points out how he stood by us over Greece (which is not a vital point for France, and with whom France has no Pact), directly we asked him. He therefore believes you will do the same about Roumania which is the key to the whole situation and which can only be saved by a clear declaration by the two Western Powers today. He gave his consent about Greece without even consulting his Cabinet which has unanimously decided that Roumania must be included in today's declarations. M. Daladier was to have made declarations at mid-day but has consented to postpone it until 3 o'clock in order to coincide with our declarations in Parliament.

The French Ambassador is to see you at once.

¹ Not printed. In this telegram Sir E. Phipps reported that he had carried out the instructions in No. 144.

² There is no record of any such unnumbered telegram in the Foreign Office archives. The reference may be a mistake for telegram No. 150 (No. 144.)

No. 54

Sir R. Hoare (Bucharest) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 13, 11.15 a.m.)
No. 118 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 5136/3356/18]

BUCHAREST, April 13, 1939

My telegram 115.¹

The Minister for Foreign Affairs has begged me most earnestly to support the request that he has made through the Roumanian Minister for the

¹ No. 44.

mention in the Prime Minister's statement today of readiness to assist Roumania if attacked. He understands that the French Government agrees that this would be most opportune.

From my immediately following telegram² you will see that the Hungarian Government appear to have used threatening language regarding Roumania at Belgrade.

² No. 55.

No. 55

Sir R. Hoare (Bucharest) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 13, 11.20 a.m.)

No. 119 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 5375/3356/18]

BUCHAREST, April 13, 1939

Minister for Foreign Affairs received through Yugoslav and Polish Ambassadors late last night report of representations made by Hungarian Government on the subject of Roumanian concentration on the frontier. Telegram from Belgrade reports Hungarian representation as stating that if Roumanian ultimatum [*sic* ? mobilisation] continues Hungarian Government will be 'obliged to have recourse to military measures'.

Information from Warsaw is to the effect that if mobilisation continued Hungarian Government will 'proceed in the same manner'.

Roumanian Government has requested Yugoslav Government to inform Hungarian Government that since March 25 no new concentrations have taken place and that in fact certain de-concentrations have taken place. Troops occupy strictly defensive positions and Roumanian precautions are justified by Hungarian troop movements and violent press and printed campaign. Pacific intervention [*sic* ? intentions] of Roumanian Government have been repeatedly renewed and they are prepared to repeat that they respect their neighbours' frontiers as firmly as they are prepared to maintain their own.

Roumanian Government request Yugoslav Government to enquire into precisely what is meant by 'have recourse to military measures'. If it should be established that Hungarian intention is to attack Roumania, Yugoslav Government will it is hoped be prepared to remind Hungarian Government of bearing of Roumanian-Yugoslav Alliance.¹

Polish Government has informed Roumanian Government that they are making vigorous representations at Budapest and trust Roumanian Government will scrupulously avoid giving Hungarian Government any pretext for increasing tension.

Repeated to Berlin, Budapest, Belgrade, Warsaw, Angora, Athens, Sofia and Moscow.

¹ The Roumanian-Yugoslav Treaty of 1921 is printed in *British and Foreign State Papers*, Vol. 123, p. 1046.

No. 56

Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 13, 12.15 p.m.)

No. 276 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 5145/15/18]

BERLIN, April 13, 1939

1. General Halder Chief of the General Staff yesterday made an approach to my United States colleague in order to express concern at the attitude of United States towards Germany and no doubt to obtain Mr. Geist's reaction.

2. General Halder informed him that the German army dreaded the idea of an European war but would most certainly march if ordered to do so by Herr Hitler. There was no alternative.

3. The General expressed the opinion that once Germany had secured her necessary economic outlet, the party would adopt a more moderate policy. He added, since Great Britain and France had taken diplomatic action to cut Germany off from the East, Herr Hitler was now once again looking westwards.

4. In reply to a question about alleged German designs on Ukraine General Halder said that Herr Hitler was at present more inclined to seek economic advantage from Poland.

5. With regard to Albania he said that Italy had occupied that country because she had been foiled in Tunis. If only Italy could receive satisfaction in Tunis this would solve the Mediterranean problem.

6. United States Chargé d'Affaires tells me that he spoke to General Halder in no uncertain language about opinion in his country adding that she would not delay in using her resources to oppose Germany in the event of war and that, unless there was a radical change in German policy, it might be years before they would have an American Ambassador in Berlin.

Please do not quote Mr. Geist's statements.

No. 57

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)

No. 151 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 5137/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, April 13, 1939, 1.35 p.m.

We remain of our own opinion as to the proper timing of the announcement of a guarantee to Roumania, and regret loss of what we think should have been a useful instrument, both in obtaining Turkish concurrence and Bulgarian adhesion. But in the interests of solidarity, we do not feel that we can fail to respond to M. Daladier's urgent appeal, especially in view of the evidence French Government have given us in the past of their readiness to meet our wishes. We are accordingly including in our declaration this afternoon an announcement of our guarantee of Roumania.¹

¹ For the text of the announcement in the House of Commons see note at end of Chapter II.

No. 58

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 13, 2.5 p.m.)

No. 166 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 5181/3356/18]

PARIS, April 13, 1939

Your telegram No. 151.¹

I have informed M. Daladier, who is moved and intensely grateful for decision of His Majesty's Government. He begs me to thank Your Lordship and Prime Minister warmly. He is convinced this is the right course to adopt.

¹ No. 57.

No. 59

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw)
No. 97 Telegraphic [C 5136/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, April 13, 1939, 2.10 p.m.

Please inform at once the Polish Government that His Majesty's Government have decided to give forthwith to the Roumanian Government a guarantee such as they had proposed giving in conjunction with the French and Polish Governments. This will be announced in Parliament today. The French Government are taking similar action.

Repeated to Angora, Athens, Sofia, Belgrade, Paris, Rome, Moscow and Bucharest.

No. 60

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora)
No. 101 Telegraphic [C 5137/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, April 13, 1939, 2.15 p.m.

His Majesty's Government have decided not to wait on Polish Government but to give forthwith to Roumanian Government guarantee such as they have proposed giving in conjunction with French and Polish Government. This will be announced in Parliament today. French Government are taking similar action.

His Majesty's Government have been moved to take a quick decision on this matter in response to insistent representations by French Government: they of course maintain all the proposals which they have made to the Turkish Government and will wish to continue discussion with them of the best methods for developing their co-operation.

Please immediately inform Turkish Government.

Repeated to Paris, Rome, Warsaw, Moscow, Sofia, Belgrade, Bucharest, and Athens.

No. 61

Viscount Halifax to Sir R. Hoare (Bucharest)

No. 115 Telegraphic [C 5136/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 13, 1939, 2.45 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 118.¹

Please inform at once the Roumanian Government that His Majesty's Government have decided to give forthwith to the Roumanian Government a guarantee such as they had proposed giving in conjunction with the French and Polish Governments. This will be announced in Parliament today. The French Government are taking similar action.

Repeated to Angora, Athens, Sofia, Belgrade, Paris, Rome, Moscow and Warsaw.

¹ No. 54.

No. 62

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax

(Received April 13, 6.20 p.m.)

No. 121 Telegraphic [R 2766/790/7]

ANGORA, *April 13, 1939, 3.55 p.m.*

Mr. Rendel's telegram No. 44.¹

Minister for Foreign Affairs told me on April 12 that he felt it important that Bulgaria should be brought into Balkan Entente and that he intended to put the following suggestion to Roumanian Government.

2. Bulgaria to join Balkan Entente and Roumania to give an undertaking that Dobrudja question should be reconsidered after a stated interval of time. If necessary it could be settled by conference of Balkan States.

3. Minister for Foreign Affairs felt that once Bulgaria had joined the Entente, question of inter-Balkan frontiers would gradually lose importance and a sort of Balkan United States would then emerge.

4. I agreed with him as to importance of bringing Bulgaria into Balkan Entente and, without assuming any responsibility for it myself, I urged him to proceed with his suggestions. I said that His Majesty's Government had always been in favour of a settlement of this question within the Balkan family provided it could be done without provoking explosions. I also drew his attention to statement in wireless news from London that Herr Hitler intended to mediate in the Dobrudja question. I said I should inform you of his proposal and he told me that he intended to proceed with it.

5. Minister for Foreign Affairs is in general very despondent about morale

¹ Not printed. In this telegram of April 11, Mr. Rendel emphasized the strength of feeling in Bulgaria regarding the Dobrudja and suggested that as an alternative or in addition to direct advice from His Majesty's Government, Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen should ask the Turkish Government to use their influence with the Roumanian Government to make some concession to Bulgaria as part of a new general understanding.

of all his Balkan allies and of Bulgaria. He holds the same views as myself as to the importance of creating a rallying point here from which encouraging influence can radiate (see my telegram No. 112² paragraph 5).

6. He tells me that he is in continual contact with M. Kiossievanoﬀ.³

Repeated to Sofia, Athens, Belgrade and Bucharest.

² No. 124.

³ Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen was informed on April 14 that his language at this interview was approved.

No. 63

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax

(Received April 14, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 126 Telegraphic [R 2796/790/7]

ANGORA, April 13, 1939, 8.26 p.m.

My telegram 121.¹

Minister for Foreign Affairs has communicated accordingly with Bucharest and Sofia offering his good services to both parties for an agreement on lines indicated.

2. His idea includes admission of Bulgaria to Balkan Entente followed by a general guarantee of outside frontiers. He feels this should strengthen the morale of the Balkan Entente and furnish an element of resistance to German pressure, creating a solid block south of the Danube.

3. I am sure Minister for Foreign Affairs would be glad of any sympathy we could give to his scheme either in Bucharest or in Sofia.

4. He tells me he has on several occasions warned the German Chargé d'Affaires of the bad effect which would be produced here if Germany attempted to exercise pressure on Bulgaria.

Repeated to Sofia, Athens, Belgrade and Bucharest.

¹ No. 62.

No. 64

*Viscount Halifax to Sir R. Campbell (Belgrade), Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw),
and Sir G. Knox (Budapest)*

No. 98¹ Telegraphic [C 5375/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, April 13, 1939, 11.0 p.m.

Bucharest telegram No. 119.²

1. Please telegraph your observations.

2. Hungarian Minister yesterday informed Foreign Office that should this Roumanian mobilisation be continued, the Hungarian Government would be compelled to take similar measures within the next few days.

Repeated to Bucharest.

¹ No. 98 to Belgrade; No. 101 to Warsaw; No. 20 to Budapest.

² No. 55.

*Viscount Halifax to Sir R. Hoare (Bucharest)**No. 174 [C 5139/3356/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, April 13, 1939

Sir,

Before his interview with me, reported in my despatch No. 163¹ of the 10th April, the Roumanian Minister brought M. Cretzianu, the Secretary-General of the Roumanian Ministry for Foreign Affairs, to see Sir Alexander Cadogan.

2. M. Cretzianu said that the Roumanian Government considered the proposals which His Majesty's Government had recently made to the Roumanian Government as being of the highest importance. As they understood it these proposals indicated that His Majesty's Government believed that Roumania occupied an important position in Europe and that they wished to help Roumania.

3. The offer of His Majesty's Government to help Roumania had been made dependent in the first place on Roumanian resistance to any threat to her independence. On this point M. Cretzianu drew attention to the statements made by the Roumanian Prime Minister and by the Minister for Foreign Affairs on the 27th March at a meeting of the Superior Council of the National Renaissance Front. On that occasion M. Calinesco had stated that the Roumanian Government had informed foreign Powers at a very early stage that they were prepared to defend their frontiers. For the integrity of her territory Roumania would fight against any Power with all her strength and without considering what would be the result of the struggle. They had a sacred patrimony bequeathed to them by their predecessors which they were obliged to maintain at the cost of any sacrifice. Whatever the result history would only record their determination to lead an independent life and their courage to defend it. M. Gafencu had stated that Roumania had proved that she was determined to defend her frontiers and her independence by force of arms. If ever these were threatened she would fight. M. Cretzianu thought that these two statements put the matter beyond all doubt. The Roumanian Government understood that His Majesty's Government should wish to be kept informed and to be consulted if the Roumanian Government had reason to think that they were menaced directly or indirectly.

4. As regards the second condition put by His Majesty's Government, namely, that Poland should come to the assistance of Roumania, M. Cretzianu said that the Roumanian Government were now in consultation with the Polish Government. He drew attention to Article (1) of the Polish-Roumanian Treaty stating that 'Roumania and Poland undertook reciprocally to respect and to maintain against all external aggression their present territorial integrity and political independence.' By the terms of this article Poland would be bound to come to Roumania's assistance against any

¹ No. 37.

external aggression. But he drew attention to the last paragraph of Article (2) of the Treaty providing that the actual methods of execution of the stipulations of the Treaty should be the subject of technical discussion, and he added that in point of fact when the Treaty was drawn up the only menace to the two countries came from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and the only technical arrangements which had been discussed were directed to meet that menace. But he claimed that the general obligation existed under Article (1) of the Treaty.

5. The Roumanian Government feared that the negotiations with Poland might yet take some little time, and what they wanted was that His Majesty's Government should immediately indicate their readiness to come to the help of Roumania, if attacked. Such a declaration would be invaluable, both for steadying opinion in Roumania, and externally as a warning against aggression. M. Cretzianu feared that if there was public discussion of the Polish-Roumanian Treaty position, that might only draw attention to the fact that the Polish-Roumanian Treaty might not be held to operate automatically against German aggression, and that could only encourage Germany and Hungary. He added that such a discussion was already proceeding in the Hungarian press. Therefore, what the Roumanian Government wanted was that His Majesty's Government should make an immediate declaration of assistance to Roumania similar to that which they had exchanged with Poland. M. Cretzianu referred to the recent leading article in 'The Times', drawing a distinction between 'independence' and 'integrity',² and said that German propaganda was making the most of this in Roumania. It was, therefore, highly expedient to make the attitude of His Majesty's Government clear.

6. Sir Alexander Cadogan said that he could, of course, give M. Cretzianu no answer to his request for an immediate declaration of support of Roumania: and reminded him that in the proposal which we had submitted in Bucharest, our support of Roumania was dependent on that of Poland, but that he would report his representation, which he was sure would receive all the consideration it deserved.

7. Finally, M. Cretzianu said that one of the most important questions was whether, and in what way, we could assist Roumania in the matter of armaments. The Roumanian Legation had already submitted full particulars of their requirements and would be glad to know at the earliest possible moment what could be done to meet their wishes. He hoped for a very early reply on this and the other question which he had raised.

8. Sir Alexander Cadogan said that we were also anxious to know what progress was being made in the Polish-Roumanian discussion. If Poland was ready to give a guarantee to Roumania, that would simplify the whole matter, and he had understood from M. Tilea a day or two ago that M. Beck had expressed to him the opinion that a satisfactory conclusion would be reached in two or three days.

9. M. Cretzianu raised the question whether we desired that Roumania

² The reference appears to be to a leading article in 'The Times' of April 1.

should give reciprocal guarantees. Sir Alexander Cadogan told him that though, of course, it would be important to know that if we or Poland were attacked Roumania would come to our assistance, at the same time we did not propose in our general scheme to make that an absolute condition of our guaranteeing Roumania.

10. M. Cretzianu said that, in the view of the Roumanian Government, Roumania would be forced into war in any case: for example, if Germany were to attack Poland and the Western Powers were to come to Poland's assistance, Germany would not hope to wage a war successfully on both fronts unless she could obtain possession of the Roumanian oil fields, and therefore she would certainly attempt to invade Roumania, and Roumania would be in the war. Therefore, he thought that a reciprocal guarantee from Roumania would not add materially to the strength of our position and might only be a provocative to Germany at a moment when Roumanian armaments were at a low point.

11. He added, in conclusion, with reference to the discussions with M. Beck, that he was afraid these might meet with certain difficulties owing to the attitude of Hungary. He was sorry to say that the Roumanian negotiations with Hungary were not going well. The Roumanian Government had asked the Hungarian Government to give a declaration that they would respect the Roumanian frontier, but the Hungarians had merely replied that they had given orders to their troops to respect the frontier. This was not at all the same thing, and the Roumanian Government found this reply very unsatisfactory. King Carol and the Prime Minister had just made a tour of the frontier, and certain units were being moved nearer to the frontier, which was not a natural one and was difficult to hold.

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

No. 66

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)

No. 877 [C 5140/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 13, 1939*

Sir,

The French Ambassador called on Sir Alexander Cadogan this morning to give M. Daladier's reply to the representations which M. Corbin had made to him last night at our request.¹

2. M. Corbin said that he had put our views shortly under three heads, as follows:—

- (1) Roumania was not in immediate danger. The immediate menace came from Italy, and Italy's action in Albania had been the cause of the reassembly of Parliament.
- (2) It was essential that the French and British Governments should take

¹ See also No. 144.

exactly the same line, and it would be deplorable if any divergence of attitude were manifested.

- (3) To give an immediate assurance to Roumania would throw away the lever we possessed for inducing Poland and Turkey to give a similar guarantee.

3. On the first point, M. Corbin said that M. Daladier took an entirely different view: he still believed that Germany's main objective is [was] Roumania. In M. Daladier's view, a German attack on Roumania, with the possible help of Hungary, or, in any case, with Hungary's complicity, would have a most disastrous effect upon the whole future of Europe.

4. The occupation of Roumania would give Germany oil supplies to carry her through a long war, and, in present circumstances, without those supplies Germany could not face a long war. M. Daladier did not pay too much attention to troop concentrations in the neighbourhood of the Polish frontier: they might be only a feint, and it might be quite easy to turn them quickly against Roumania in a lightning attack such as Herr Hitler specialises in.

5. On the second point, M. Daladier said that no one held this view more strongly than he himself. He was convinced of the necessity of close Anglo-French co-operation, and any apparent divergence would lead to all kinds of mischievous interpretations. He hoped, therefore, very strongly, that His Majesty's Government would be able to align themselves in this matter with the French Government.

6. He recalled that he responded at once to our request that he should join in a guarantee of Greece, although he was under no treaty obligations to do so. Similarly, in regard to Poland, though in this case it was not much more than a reaffirmation of existing French obligations, he readily supported the move made by His Majesty's Government.

7. M. Daladier believed that His Majesty's Government would not wish the French Government alone to give their guarantee to Roumania: he believed such a guarantee was a 'vital necessity', and, moreover, to be in the general line of British policy. He felt that if no mention were made of Roumania that country would become an object of German attack, as silence would be interpreted as a sign of disinterestedness.

8. This matter has been discussed twice in Paris: once at an ordinary Cabinet meeting and again at a meeting of the Conseil des Ministres, presided over by the President, and the decision to give and to announce a guarantee was taken after a prolonged examination of all the implications.

9. In regard to point (3), quite apart from any doubts as to the personal rectitude of M. Beck, it must be observed that, in reply to a question put to them by the French Government, the Polish Government, the day before yesterday, said that they must negotiate with Hungary, and that they could not come to any conclusion with the Roumanian Government before that negotiation was complete. That negotiation would be likely to take a few weeks at the least, and we could not count on a favourable answer from M. Beck, or even an answer of any kind, for some time to come.

10. As regards our leverage on Turkey, M. Daladier took a different view. He quoted conversations which the French Ambassador had had recently in Angora, when the Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs had declared that Turkey would be unable to do anything until the Western Powers had stated their attitude in regard to the Balkan States and to Turkey. The Roumanian Minister in Angora had asked the Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs what Turkey would do if Roumania were attacked, and the answer was that, if Bulgaria attacked Roumania, Turkey would fulfil her obligations under the Balkan Entente: if Hungary attacked Roumania, all would depend on the position of the British and French Governments, and the Turkish Government could not determine their attitude until the position of these Governments was made clear. Consequently, M. Daladier believed that to give an immediate guarantee to Roumania would have an opposite effect to that feared by His Majesty's Government. Instead of deterring the Turkish Government from taking a commitment, it would induce them to do so and make it easier for them.

11. In reply to Sir Alexander Cadogan's enquiry, M. Corbin said that it was quite clear that the French Government were resolved in any event to-day to announce their guarantee of Roumania, and he communicated the annexed text of the form which the declaration would take in the event that His Majesty's Government could not make a similar announcement in regard to Roumania.

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

ANNEX TO No. 66

Form of Proposed Declaration

(*Translation.*)

As regards Poland, the French Government, faithful to the spirit and letter of its alliance with Poland, has been happy to reaffirm it and to complete it in conformity with the assurances given to the Polish Government by the British Government, which cover Poland against any threat directed against its vital interests.

Inspired by the same desire to safeguard peace, the French Government has decided to assure the same assistance to Roumania as to Poland, and to come to Roumania's assistance with all the means in its power to maintain that country's independence. This safeguard of the position of Roumania should in its turn permit the strengthening of all those relationships which will assure the maintenance of peace in the Balkans and in the Mediterranean. It is in this spirit that the French Government is associating itself with the assurances which the British Government is giving publicly today to Greece in promising this State the assistance of the two Powers if she should consider her vital interests menaced by external aggression.

We have been happy to learn that the Turkish Government is associating itself with us in this guarantee.

CHAPTER II

The Italian attack on Albania: the announcement of the British guarantee to Greece. (April 3–14, 1939.)

No. 67

Sir A. Ryan (Durazzo) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 4, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 21 Telegraphic [R 2285/1335/90]

DURAZZO, April 3, 1939, 5.25 p.m.

My telegram No. 19.¹

Great nervousness still prevails here regarding intentions of the Italian Government. I have heard different versions of their alleged demands. I did not attach much importance to them until my Greek colleague told me yesterday that he had it from a source he considers certain that demands in fact had been made for acceptance by Albania of extensive administrative control and admission of camouflaged troops as well as other control.

Note of resistance in case of attack is still struck in Albanian circles. I hear of inconspicuous military preparations to this end.

Patriotic demonstrations by students and others took place in Tirana on the night of April 1 and again last night. They followed performance of a patriotic play but it does not appear to have been staged in order to provoke them. On Saturday night demonstration . . .² paraded the streets and passed in front of various Legations acclaiming the King and 'our friends'. Some arrests were made. I have no particulars yet about last night.

New Albanian Minister in Rome and my Italian colleague returned to Tirana yesterday. As former cannot have reached Rome until the morning of April 1 his return is very significant.

Some Albanians have taken comfort from Mr. Chamberlain's statement of March 31³ and the reported presence of British ships at Corfu. If the latter report is true I presume it relates to ordinary naval movements but I would welcome information.

I have received Rome telegram No. 252.⁴ I recognise importance which

¹ See Volume IV of this Series, No. 385.

² The text is here uncertain.

³ See Volume IV of this Series, No. 582, and Parl. Deb., 5th ser., H. of C., vol. 345, col. 2415.

⁴ Not printed. This telegram reported the view of the Soviet Chargé d'Affaires in Rome that, although troop movements seemed to be taking place from Italian ports, he did not think that the Italian Government were intending to act by force in Albania since they did not wish to antagonize Yugoslavia.

Italy might in principle attach to not antagonising Yugoslavia but in the present circumstances may she not have decided to take the bull by the horns at all costs?

I will collect latest information in Tirana this afternoon.

Repeated to Athens, Belgrade, Rome, Angora, Bucharest and Sofia.

No. 68

The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 4, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 255 Telegraphic [R 2257/1335/90]

ROME, April 3, 1939, 9.0 p.m.

Your telegram No. 254.¹

General Klecanda ex-Czecho-Slovakian Military Attaché here who is visiting Rome informs Military Attaché that he has information from a highly placed Italian source that Italy will occupy Albania in the course of the next few days.

Source expressed regret that this decision had been taken but said that the Government was determined to produce a success to put before the people and having found itself blocked in Tunisia considered that Albania could be swallowed without risk of international complications. General Klecanda is most anxious that his name should not be connected with this.

¹ The reference appears to be to Rome telegram No. 254 of April 3 (not printed), which reported that the Counsellor of the Greek Legation in Rome had told a member of Lord Perth's staff that he found it difficult to believe the current rumours of troop concentrations at Bari and Brindisi, as he did not think that the Italians would want to upset Yugoslav opinion at that moment.

No. 69

The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 3, 10.0 p.m.)

No. 256 Telegraphic [R 2262/1335/90]

ROME, April 3, 1939, 9.0 p.m.

General Toussaint French Military Attaché has just returned from a visit to Bari where he had conversation with Italian General commanding 23rd Division stationed at Bari.

This General informed him that this division was not being reorganised from a three regiment to a two regiment basis because it had a special mission allotted to it and later in the course of conversation remarked that his troops had recently been practising embarkation and disembarkation.

General Toussaint saw no signs of collection of shipping nor undue military activity but obtained the impression that special mission referred to by Italian General is Albania which would be seized by Italy in the event of war.

*The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax**(Received April 4, 9.30 a.m.)**No. 258 Telegraphic [R 2286/399/22]*

ROME, April 4, 1939, 1.0 a.m.

My telegram No. 253.¹

Military Attaché went to see Director of Military Operations and Intelligence this morning² and asked him if he could give him a fresh statement about the calling up of reservists in view of numerous rumours which were going around. Military Attaché said that he had heard the whole of 1901 class had been called up and also reservists from later classes up to 1909. Furthermore there were rumours of certain individuals from classes 1910-11, 12, 13 and 14.

He added that he had heard reports of despatch of regular units to Spain in civilian clothes and that these reports had named Alpine troops.

Colonel Tripiccone said he was glad to be able to state that he could be perfectly frank with the Military Attaché and would tell him all he knew on these two points. He would deal with them separately and take Spanish rumours first.

He denied categorically that any regular units had been sent to Spain or as far as he knew any regular soldiers at all. He pointed out that volunteer corps in Spain had had heavy casualties in the last battles and that it had been decided to replace these casualties before it was known that collapse of Republican armies would take place so suddenly. This had accounted for despatch of a considerable number of volunteers. He added that now that the war was definitely over these despatches would cease. He observed that the French were naturally nervous about the Pyrenees frontier and that he suspected that this nervousness had given rise to the rumours of despatch of Alpini. He could assure me that Italians considered the Pyrenees a hundred per cent. Spanish frontier and had no intention whatever of sending troops there nor in fact to any part of Spain.

Military Attaché mentioned rumour about Gibraltar. Colonel Tripiccone replied that he hoped that he had treated such reports with disdain which they merited and that he understood that nothing was further from Italian intentions than anything which would disturb Italy's improved relations with Great Britain.

Colonel Tripiccone said that Military Attaché must realise that situation between Italy and France was tense and that undoubtedly each side was hearing rumours of military precautions taken by the other which were perhaps exaggerated. Anyway Italy had taken what precautionary measures she considered necessary to protect herself and these amounted to calling up the whole of 1901 class.

¹ Not printed. This telegram of April 2 reported that the Military Attaché was intending to ask the Ministry of War on April 3 whether there was any truth in a rumour that the 1901 class was being called up in full.

² This telegram was drafted on April 3.

Of the other classes only specialists had been and were being taken and Colonel Tripiccione was uncertain to which classes call-up was being extended but he added that he could assure me that this was a normal training measure.

Colonel Tripiccione stated that all necessary precautions had been taken to defend the Italian frontiers against France in Europe and Northern Africa but that no intention of offensive action existed nor had Italy prepared forces for such operations. He was disappointed with M. Daladier's reply to Signor Mussolini³ and agreed that obstacle to an amicable agreement between Italy and France was on both sides *amour propre*.

³ On March 29. See Volume IV of this Series, Nos. 382-3.

No. 71

Sir A. Ryan (*Durazzo*) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 4, 5.15 p.m.)

No. 22 Telegraphic [R 2332/1335/90]

DURAZZO, April 4, 1939, 2.15 p.m.

Demonstration on Sunday evening was more unanimous and perhaps less spontaneous than that of the previous night. A crowd went to the Palace and acclaimed the King who sent tranquillising message by Minister for Foreign Affairs to representatives who asked to see him. Smaller demonstrations yesterday morning attracted less attention. Demonstrations have been anti-Italian.

I saw six foreign colleagues yesterday not including Italians or Germans. We all have the same difficulty in getting the real facts of the situation from Albanian Government. They published completely anodine communiqué¹ early yesterday afternoon but calling out of reserves has been intensified.

Early occupation of Valona is very generally expected. Italian Consul-General there is said to have foreshadowed it clearly to local Albanians, to have urged that it should not be resisted and to have distributed bribes.

Italian Minister and Sereggi² saw the King immediately on their return from Rome on 2nd April. Albanian Cabinet held prolonged sitting but the King is believed to have taken sole charge of negotiations with Italy. He received my Italian colleague again yesterday.

Everything suggests probability of Italian demands, whatever their exact form, including some which would definitely deprive Albania of her independence and that the King is determined to resist these by all means although he is willing to make large concessions otherwise. If negotiations break down and Italians occupy Valona he may possibly retire to Burrel [? Burele] and direct resistance from there. His personal position is complicated by the fact that the Queen's confinement is due at any moment.

¹ See No. 133.

² General Zef Sereggi, Senior A.D.C. to King Zog and newly appointed Albanian Minister in Rome.

Since yesterday morning the banks have refused to sell foreign exchange for Albanian money.

My French colleague takes grave view of situation. He is impressed by information from the Greek Minister (who did not give it to me direct) that Albanian representative at Bucharest was told recently by well-informed person in Italy that objective of Italians was not Albania itself but Salonika. It is also suggested in some diplomatic circles here that if general war became probable the Italians would at once occupy Corfu and that occupation of Albanian coast opposite would be necessary to enable them to hold it.

Repeated to Athens, Belgrade, Rome, Angora, Bucharest and Sofia.

No. 72

The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax

(Received April 4, 9.15 p.m.)

No. 263 Telegraphic [R 2333/1335/90]

ROME, April 4, 1939, 6.55 p.m.

My telegram No. 255.¹ Durazzo telegram No. 21.²

I remarked to the Minister for Foreign Affairs this morning that a persistent story seems [? to be] going round as to possible Italian action in Albania. I had no instructions to make enquiries but I sincerely trusted that these [*sic*] were not well founded because I could imagine nothing which could do more harm to Anglo-Italian relations than any Italian *coup de main* directed against that country. Albania was a member of the League of Nations. But further any change in the *status quo* in Albania would to my mind be a definite breach of Anglo-Italian Agreement³ to which we would both attach the greatest importance.

Minister for Foreign Affairs replied that the whole situation in Albania was very odd. He would show me a telegram he had sent to various Embassies and Legations setting out the Italian position and the past recent history. He had informed the German Ambassador of the contents. Following is a short summary.

On March 8 King Zog proposed to the Italian Government that owing to the altered situation in Europe a change was required in the terms of the Italian and Albanian alliance and that the latter should be reinforced. On March 20 King Zog asked that Italian troops should be sent to Albania. Count Ciano told me very confidentially and solely for the information of my Government that King Zog had suggested that these troops should be sent because he wished to make an attack on Kossovo. He apparently thought that after the Czech affair Yugoslavia would be dismembered. Italians had returned a definite refusal to this proposal as they wished to continue their

¹ No. 68.

² No. 67.

³ The Anglo-Italian Agreement of April 16, 1938, is printed in Cmd. 5726 (Treaty Series No. 31) of 1938. See also Volume III of this Series, Chapter VI, for the negotiations regarding its entry into force.

existing good relations with Yugoslavia. Shortly after this the Italian Government submitted through diplomatic channels a scheme for a reinforced alliance in accordance with King Zog's suggestion of March 8. This new scheme, the telegram stated, did not in any way change the existing juridical position of Albania and was not accompanied by any ultimatum. King Zog was only asked to exercise [*sic*] its terms. Instead of doing so King Zog started to mobilise and began to exercise [*sic*] anti-Italian measures and displayed a hostile attitude to Italian interests. Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs in his telegram observed that if Italian interests were threatened Italy would be bound to intervene since she had invested large sums of money in Albania and had large material interests and a considerable number of Italian nationals there. Italian Government had no wish whatever to change the *status quo* in Albania but they felt bound to protect their interests. Minister for Foreign Affairs added verbally that he himself believed that King Zog would now yield and would consider terms of the draft pact which Italian Government had submitted. Italy as I knew had a treaty of alliance with Albania and it was essential that King Zog should not embark on any rash act such as an attack on Yugoslavia otherwise Italy might be compelled to intervene against Yugoslavia which was the last thing she wished to do. It was therefore essential to her that King Zog should be kept in order.

I remarked that I understood there was an Italian and Yugoslavian understanding by which the two Governments had agreed to keep in touch should events in Albania require it. Minister for Foreign Affairs replied that Italy was in continuous contact with Yugoslavia about Albania.

I thanked the Minister for Foreign Affairs for having explained the situation so fully to me and expressed the hope that it would not be necessary to take forcible measures repeating again how much importance I attached to complete fulfilment of the Anglo-Italian Agreement.

Count Ciano observed that he trusted that I would not take Italian and Albanian situation too seriously.

Repeated to Durazzo, Belgrade, Athens and Paris.

No. 73

The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax

(Received April 4, 10.5 p.m.)

No. 265 Telegraphic [R 2392/7/22]

ROME, April 4, 1939, 9.0 p.m.

My telegram No. 243.¹

Count Ciano told me he was now able to give me an answer to question Sir N. Charles had put to him the other day about relations between Italy and France.

Sir N. Charles had remarked that Italy and France appeared to him to be

¹ See Volume IV of this Series, No. 386.

like two old gentlemen, neither of whom were prepared, for reasons of prestige, to take the initiative. The Minister for Foreign Affairs was now able to inform me that if France were prepared to take the initiative Italy would not refuse discussion. For instance he said that if the French Ambassador came to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and said that he was ready to talk, Italy would be equally ready to do so and conversations could thus begin.

No. 74

Minute by Sir O. Sargent¹

[R 2322/1335/90]

FOREIGN OFFICE, April 4, 1939

The Greek Minister called this morning to communicate a series of reports which his Government received yesterday from the Greek Minister in Albania. According to these reports the Albanian Government were increasingly alarmed at impending Italian intentions. In fact, what they foresee is that Italy is in the near future going to try to impose an Italian protectorate over Albania.

From reliable sources the Italian Minister is alleged, *inter alia*, to have demanded complete control of all the civil services in Albania as well as of the army and gendarmerie. According to the same story, he likewise demanded that permission should be given to the Italian Government to send a complete division to Albania under the guise of workmen, who would be employed in the maintenance of aerodromes and in the drainage of marshes.

The King has refused to accept these demands and is resolved not to admit any concessions which would endanger the independence and integrity of the international status of Albania. But he is ready to accept the organisation by an Italian officer of the Youth Movement in Albania and is willing to discuss economic questions with the Italian Government.

More recent telegrams from the Greek Minister report that the Italian Minister has told the Albanian Government that Italy insists on her proposals being accepted. As a result the situation is considered as critical, and the Albanian Government have been moving some troops so as to organise resistance. They have also called up three classes of reservists from the districts of Koritza and Argirocastro.

The Italian Consul in Valona is also reported to have told a prominent Albanian that Italy has decided to occupy Valona so as to protect her interests, and that he (the Albanian) ought to advise the inhabitants to submit.

The Greek Legation in Paris reports with all reservation that they learn from a Polish source that Italy and Yugoslavia have started negotiations for the partition of Albania.

¹ A summary of paragraphs 1-4 of this minute was telegraphed to Sir A. Ryan at 9.45 p.m. on April 4, and was repeated to Paris, Rome, Belgrade, Athens, Sofia and Angora.

I told M. Simopoulos that although we had recently received various unconfirmed rumours which might indicate that the Italians were collecting troops for the occupation of Albania, we had received no reports to show that such an occupation was imminent,² nor had we received any reports from our Minister in Tirana, later than Sir A. Ryan's telegram No. 19,³ which would confirm those which the Greek Government had now received. We would, however, of course at once make enquiries, and I promised to let M. Simopoulos know what answers we received.

Lastly, I asked M. Simopoulos whether his Government had questioned the Yugoslav Government with regard to these reports. He did not know and said that he would enquire.

O. G. SARGENT

² Sir O. Sargent noted here that when the conversation took place he had not yet seen Rome telegram No. 255 (No. 68). Sir E. Phipps telegraphed at 8 p.m. on April 4 that the Political Director of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had told Mr. Campbell that 'he had reason to fear an Italian invasion in Albania within the next day or so. He had no definite opinion regarding the reasons which might prompt such action.'

³ See Volume IV of this Series, No. 385.

No. 75

The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 5, 8.15 p.m.)

No. 271 Telegraphic [R 2350/1335/90]

ROME, April 5, 1939, 7.15 p.m.

Durazzo telegram No. 22.¹

A member of the United States Embassy called this morning and read out to member of the staff two telegrams which United States Minister, Tirana, had sent off last night.

The first said that the Italians had demanded from the Albanian Government: Italian control of the gendarmerie, finance, the Youth Movement, aerodromes, the reclaimed areas and mineral resources.

The second telegram which was despatched at 10 p.m. last night said that, following upon a Cabinet meeting yesterday afternoon presided over by King Zog, a representative of the Cabinet, a former Prime Minister, called on the Greek Minister as Doyen of the Diplomatic Corps and gave him verbal message to the effect that the Italian demands on the Albanian Government meant Italian control over all essentials of Albanian life and in [*sic*], he considers, the establishment of an Italian protectorate over Albania. King Zog was determined to resist these demands and was appealing to the Powers of the Little Entente and also to Great Britain and France.

¹ No. 71.

The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax
 (Received April 6, 3.10 p.m.)
 No. 275 Telegraphic [R 2393/7/22]

ROME, April 6, 1939, 1.40 p.m.

Following for Secretary of State.

I had a long conversation yesterday morning with François-Poncet, whom I had not seen for some considerable time, and gave him general account of my conversation with Count Ciano on April 4, see my telegram No. 265.¹

I found that he had completely changed his views. He is now most anxious that conversations between France and Italy should begin and has made strong recommendations in this sense to Paris both by sending one of his staff there and also by private letters to Bonnet. He feels this is the moment to strike. He thinks as I do that the Italians are anxious and ready to begin talk[s] and he also believes that it would be a real triumph *vis-à-vis* the Axis and particularly in regard to Hitlerian policy if a Franco-Italian agreement were concluded. To wait too long might in his opinion be disastrous.

He told me that his messenger to Paris found M. Bonnet and one or two other members of the Cabinet in agreement with his own views but that M. Daladier was extremely obstinate and strongly opposed to any conversations with Italy. Nothing that M. François-Poncet could write seems to have any effect. He telegraphed a few days ago suggesting that he might be allowed to go and see Count Ciano on some other matter such as the ill-treatment of certain French citizens on Jibuti Railway by Italians and the conversation on such a point might well lead to a more general discussion but he had received no reply to this suggestion. He remarked that he wondered whether London could not help and perhaps influence the French Government as to the desirability at the present moment of some step to promote better relations between France and Italy. I replied that when we had endeavoured very mildly but . . .² to make some suggestion about Franco-Italian relations our experience of its reception had not been happy.³ M. François-Poncet who knew about all this agreed but still hoped that something might be done. He rather feared that M. Corbin was instigating M. Daladier to remain obstinate and observed that the former had telegraphed that M. Daladier's broadcast speech⁴ and the firm line he had taken with regard to Italy had been received with great approval in Government circles in London.

I do not know whether you will think it possible or advisable to take any action but I fully agree with everything François-Poncet said about the moment being extremely opportune and as to the effect it might have on Herr Hitler.

¹ No. 73.

² The text is here uncertain.

³ See Volume IV of this Series, Chapter IV.

⁴ See No. 70, note 3.

I would only add that I doubt whether the French can afford to wait too long. Signor Mussolini is already showing some signs of impatience.

No. 77

Viscount Halifax to the Earl of Perth (Rome)

No. 159 Telegraphic [R 2333/1335/90]

FOREIGN OFFICE, April 6, 1939, 9.20 p.m.

Your telegram No. 263.¹

1. You should at once seek an interview with the Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs and inform him that we have had the advantage of studying the communication made to you by His Excellency on April 4 and by the Italian Chargé d'Affaires to a member of this office yesterday evening.² His Majesty's Government note that the Italian Government have no wish whatsoever to change the *status quo* in Albania and are solely concerned with the protection of certain interests which they consider to have been threatened; and that (to quote Signor Crolla) the scheme for strengthening the relations between Italy and Albania, which the Italian Government have put forward, does not imply any diminution of the sovereignty, integrity, or independence of Albania. His Majesty's Government are glad to have this information of the attitude of Italian Government and rely on what they are sure is equally the desire of the Italian Government, namely that no action should be taken which might lead to a clash of arms and thus increase the anxieties which at the moment beset Europe.

2. His Majesty's Government appreciate that Italy has a special interest in Albania. The Italian Government will also doubtless recall that in the resolution of the Ambassadors' Conference of November 9, 1921,³ both Governments recognised that the independence of Albania as well as the integrity and inalienability of its frontiers, as fixed by their decision of November 9, 1921, is a question of international importance.

3. In these circumstances His Majesty's Government feel sure that the Italian Government will agree that it is a matter of interest to both Governments that, as the terms of the Anglo-Italian Agreement provide, the *status quo* as regards national sovereignty of territories in the Mediterranean area should be maintained.

Repeated to Paris, Durazzo, Athens and Belgrade.

¹ No. 72.

² See No. 88.

³ The text of this resolution is printed in 'League of Nations, Official Journal', 1921, Part 2, p. 1194.

No. 78

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)

No. 128 Telegraphic [R 2393/7/22]

FOREIGN OFFICE, April 6, 1939, 10.0 p.m.

Rome telegram No. 275.¹

You will see that this telegram has considerable bearing on the instructions sent you in my telegram No. 119 Saving,² but I must leave it to your discretion to judge whether and how far you feel you can safely give advice and make suggestions to M. Daladier and M. Bonnet on the lines suggested by M. François-Poncet.

You will realize the delicacy of the position if the contents of Rome telegram No. 275 are divulged or become known in the wrong quarter.

Repeated to Rome.

¹ No. 76.

² No. 79.

No. 79

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)

No. 119 Saving: Telegraphic [R 2392/7/22]

FOREIGN OFFICE, April 6, 1939

Rome telegrams Nos. 243,¹ 251² and 265.³

1. I realise how delicate a matter it is to offer advice to the French Government with regard to their relations with Italy, but I had already some days ago come to the conclusion that recent events were disposing the Italian Government to take a less rigid view of their relationship with France than was apparent on the surface. You will see from the purely personal suggestion put forward by the Counsellor of His Majesty's Embassy at Rome and from Count Ciano's reactions thereto that in point of fact the Italian Government would be ready to enter into conversations with the French Government were the latter to authorise their Ambassador in Rome to intimate to the Italian Government a similar readiness on the part of the French Government. I quite realise that such a procedure would have the appearance of the French Government taking the initiative and for that reason may be entirely unacceptable to the French Government. At the same time I do not like to take the responsibility of not passing on the suggestion to the French Government but in doing so I do not wish to give the French Government the impression that I am trying to mediate against their wish. You therefore should merely give M. Bonnet the full facts of what has happened, without comment, except to emphasise that Sir Noel Charles was acting without instructions.

2. If, however, in the ensuing conversation M. Bonnet takes the line that it is impossible for the French Government to take the first step, that even if they did take it, it would only be misrepresented in the Italian press and that

¹ See Volume IV of this Series, No. 386.

² Ibid., No. 387.

³ No. 73.

anyhow they could not initiate discussions without prior assurance that the press campaign against France would cease, you might perhaps throw out the suggestion that he might send for the Italian Ambassador in Paris and raise the matter with him in such a way as to engage the Italian Government without compromising himself. (Alternatively, if he agreed, I would be prepared to suggest to the Italian Government that the first contacts should be between Count Grandi and M. Corbin in London.)

Repeated to Rome.

No. 80

Sir A. Ryan (Durazzo) to Viscount Halifax

(Received April 9, 10.0 a.m.)

No. 30 Telegraphic [R 2463/1335/90]

DURAZZO, April 7, 1939, 1.40 a.m.

My telegram No. 27.¹

I understand that Italian Government set a final time limit for the acceptance of their demands at 6 p.m. this evening. In any case Albanian reply rejecting them was delivered at that hour. This followed a meeting of Ministers to whom the King had left the decision, according to my United States colleague who saw him this morning. His Majesty had refused himself to accept them earlier today.

The situation here at 10 p.m. was unchanged except that Italian warships disappeared from view this afternoon leaving only one small vessel in the port. Two Italian ships went to Valona today to remove Italian nationals and two others also visited that port. They do not seem to have gone to Santi Quaranta or San Giovanni di Medua. Numerous aircraft flew over Tirana-Durazzo, Berat-Scutari and Himara. There have been no landings anywhere so far. Preparations for resistance including the distribution of arms to civilians continue here.

There is talk of Greek concentration on the southern frontier.

Please inform other posts and Commander-in-Chief Mediterranean. Please acknowledge receipt.²

¹ Not printed. This telegram reported the position in Durazzo at 1 p.m. on April 6.

² This telegram was acknowledged at 3.20 p.m. on April 9.

No. 81

Viscount Halifax to the Earl of Perth (Rome)

No. 165 Telegraphic [R 2397/1335/90]

FOREIGN OFFICE, April 7, 1939, 6.20 p.m.

The Italian Chargé d'Affaires came to see me this morning with a message from Signor Mussolini to the Prime Minister, text of which is contained in my telegram No. 167.¹

¹ No. 83.

2. I told Signor Crolla that, while it was reassuring to learn the terms of this message, there were reports that the Albanian Government were resisting. In that event it would certainly be difficult for Signor Mussolini to implement his formal assurance. I then proceeded to remind Signor Crolla that the situation might well raise in an acute form the whole question of the *status quo* in the Mediterranean, which formed so important an element of the Anglo-Italian Agreement. The Adriatic was part of the Mediterranean. The Italian Government could not therefore claim that His Majesty's Government were not concerned in the matter. On these broad grounds I should only feel completely reassured if I could be certain that the situation would develop in such a way that the conditions of that Agreement were not likely to be interfered with.

Repeated to Durazzo, Athens, Belgrade, Angora and Sofia.

No. 82

The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 7, 7.45 p.m.)

No. 288 Telegraphic [R 2418/1335/90]

ROME, April 7, 1939, 6.35 p.m.

(? Your telegram No. 159¹).

I saw the Minister for Foreign Affairs at 12.30 this morning. He had just returned from a flight over Durazzo where he had gone in order to see how matters were developing and also to encourage occupants of Italian Legation there who have refused to leave.

I communicated to him an *aide-mémoire* in the terms of your telegram under reference. Minister for Foreign Affairs stated that the Italian Government fully intended to respect the independence and integrity of Albania and *status quo* of the Mediterranean area. The move was in fact the result of an Albanian revolt against the present régime. A large number of most important chiefs in Albania, and he included amongst these the new Albanian Minister M. Sereggi, had asked Signor Mussolini to put an end to King Zog's misrule. Italians had sent troops to restore peace, order and justice in Albania. They had given orders that no bombardment of the towns or civil population should take place. Up to now there had been very little resistance on the Albanian side although a small band of comitadjis had fired some shots but had been dispersed by Bersaglieri. I gathered, however, that there had been men killed in this encounter. One of the destroyers had also fired a few shots. Population were quiet and indeed at Tirana flags were being waved welcoming aeroplanes.

Count Ciano did not think there was any serious danger for Italian Legation in Durazzo which he expected would shortly be occupied. He emphasized that the Italian Government would require a fresh Treaty to be signed between themselves and Albania giving them certain rights which they

¹ No. 77.

considered essential for the protection and development of their own interests. He expressed himself as being greatly pleased at statement made by the Prime Minister in the House of Commons yesterday.² He promised to give all assistance to the return of the archivist of the Legation who is at present stranded at Bari, and to despatch of Naval Attaché to Durazzo and has now arranged to send them across in a destroyer tomorrow morning.

Moreover he had informed Yugoslav Minister here yesterday evening of King Zog's previous request for Italian troops in order that he might launch an attack in the direction of Nish and the Minister had apparently been dumbfounded at this information regarding King Zog's intentions.

² See Parl. Deb., 5th ser., H. of C., vol. 345, cols. 2994-6.

No. 83

Viscount Halifax to the Earl of Perth (Rome)

No. 167 Telegraphic [R 2397/1335/90]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 7, 1939, 7.30 p.m.*

My immediately preceding telegram.¹

Following is text of Signor Mussolini's message to the Prime Minister. Begins:

Please inform the Prime Minister that the Duce has read with great interest his statement of yesterday in the House of Commons about Albania, and give him formal assurances that the solution of the Italo-Albanian question will take place in such a form as not to provoke a crisis in Anglo-Italian relations or the international situation in general. Ends.

Repeated to Durazzo, Athens, Belgrade, Angora and Sofia.

¹ The reference should be to telegram No. 165 to Rome (No. 81).

No. 84

Viscount Halifax to Sir S. Waterlow (Athens), Sir R. Campbell (Belgrade), Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora), and Mr. Rendel (Sofia)

No. 85¹ Telegraphic [R 2437/1335/90]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 7, 1939, 7.30 p.m.*

In view of isolation of His Majesty's Minister at Durazzo from whom we have heard nothing since yesterday afternoon² [I] should be grateful if Government to which you are accredited could keep me informed through you of the latest facts as to what is occurring in Albania.

We should of course also be glad to receive from you any indications you may have obtained as to attitude of Government to which you are accredited.

¹ No. 85 to Athens, No. 70 to Belgrade, No. 75 to Angora, No. 41 to Sofia.

² See No. 133 for an explanation of the delays in the transmission of information by Sir A. Ryan.

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 7, 9.40 p.m.)
No. 152 Telegraphic [R 2508/7/22]

PARIS, April 7, 1939, 8.0 p.m.

Your telegram No. 128.¹

In view of the Italian attack upon Albania I am of course not acting for the present on instructions in your telegram No. 119 Saving.²

As I was seeing the Minister for Foreign Affairs anyhow this afternoon however I asked him how he accounted for this attack so soon after he had (as I have several times reported) heard from the French Ambassador in Rome and from other reliable sources that the Italians were really anxious to open conversations with the French on a fairly reasonable basis.

M. Bonnet was at a loss to find a satisfactory explanation. He thinks the most optimistic explanation would be that the Italians were tired of constant German successes and wanted a fairly easy victory of their own. He admitted, however, that the Germans may have urged the Italians to take this step in order to render a Franco-Italian understanding impossible. (M. Bonnet here remarked, however, that France was not bound in any way to defend Albania by force of arms.)

His Excellency told me in strict confidence [? that] during the last few days he had received unofficial emissaries of the King of Italy and the Prince of Piedmont imploring the French Government to compose their quarrels with Italy quickly in order that the latter should not be sucked definitely into the German orbit. M. Caillaux³ had also received Italian messages of a similar nature.

I felt that until we see more clearly what the development in Albania is going to be, it would be an unfavourable moment to approach M. Daladier in this delicate matter. I therefore confined myself to remarking that M. Bonnet knew well how very anxious His Majesty's Government had always been, and still were, that France and Italy should compose their differences in a quiet and reasonable manner.

M. Bonnet, I can see, despite the Albanian affair, remains anxious, and indeed determined, to compose if possible with Italy. If and when this affair has blown over I can attack M. Daladier with more chance of success, and will then tell M. Bonnet that I have done so.

Repeated to Rome.

¹ No. 78.

² No. 79.

³ M. Caillaux was at this time President of the Finance Committee of the Senate.

*Viscount Halifax to the Earl of Perth (Rome)**No. 168 Telegraphic [R 2397/1335/90]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, April 7, 1939, 9.5 p.m.

My telegram No. 159.¹

You should at once seek an interview with Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs and with reference to the communication which you were instructed to make to His Excellency in my telegram under reference, and which doubtless you have already made, you should tell him that His Majesty's Government are gravely concerned at the reports which reach them that hostilities have broken out between Italy and Albania. His Majesty's Government find it difficult to believe that if the situation between Italy and Albania was such as described to you by His Excellency on April 4 (see your telegram No. 263²) [and] to a member of this Department by Signor Crolla on April 5 (see my telegram No. 166³), the differences between the two Governments were not capable of solution by negotiation. If the information reaching His Majesty's Government of Italian landings on the Albanian coast is true, it would appear that the independence of Albania as well as the integrity and inalienability of its frontiers, which the Italian Government as well as His Majesty's Government have pledged themselves to regard as a question of international importance, are being threatened. For this reason, as well as because the two Governments are equally pledged by the Anglo-Italian Agreement to the preservation of the maintenance of the *status quo* in the Mediterranean area, His Majesty's Government feel that they are entitled to the frankest and fullest explanation, not only of present developments in the Italo-Albanian situation and what led up to them, but also of the future intentions of the Italian Government. The explanations proffered up to date have caused His Majesty's Government profound misgivings as to those intentions and will not satisfy public opinion in this country.

In spite of Count Ciano's professions and Signor Mussolini's assurance to the Prime Minister,⁴ His Majesty's Government cannot conceal their deep concern at the course which events seem to be taking.

¹ No. 77.² No. 72.³ Not printed. This telegram summarized the conversation with Signor Crolla recorded in No. 88.⁴ See No. 83.

No. 87

*Viscount Halifax to Sir R. Campbell (Belgrade) and
Sir S. Waterlow (Athens)*

No. 63¹ Telegraphic [R 2350/1335/90]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 7, 1939, 11.0 p.m.*

Rome telegrams Nos. 263² and 271³ and Durazzo telegrams Nos. 24⁴ and 26.⁵

I should be glad to have your views as to the immediate reaction and likely attitude of the Government to which you are accredited. You should not, however, at this stage invite their views or give the impression that His Majesty's Government are prepared to take any active part in this Albanian development.

Repeated to Durazzo, Rome, Angora and Sofia.

¹ No. 63 to Belgrade, No. 80 to Athens.

² No. 72.

³ No. 75.

⁴ Not printed. In this telegram of April 5, received that day, Sir A. Ryan explained that, owing to the absence of his staff on leave, his reports would be delayed. He stated that he regarded the statements by Count Ciano reported in No. 72 as 'for the most part unconvincing'.

⁵ Not printed.

No. 88

Viscount Halifax to the Earl of Perth (Rome)

No. 524 [R 2395/1335/90]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 7, 1939*

My Lord,

The Italian Chargé d'Affaires called on a member of this Department on the 5th April and read out to him the instructions he had received from his Government to protest against the terms of what he described as a Reuter communiqué, which apparently appeared here on the 4th April. The text of this so-called communiqué is attached.

2. It was pointed out to Signor Crolla that this was in no sense an official communiqué. As far as could be ascertained, the reason for the Italian protest was, to quote Signor Crolla's instructions, because 'it is universally recognised that Albania is exclusively an Italian interest'. The Chargé d'Affaires was at once informed that this sweeping definition of Albania's international status could not be accepted, nor could it be agreed that the preamble of the Resolution of the Ambassadors' Conference of 1921 justified such a claim. As far as could be remembered, the last time the international position of Albania had been discussed between the Italian Government and His Majesty's Government was in 1927 or 1928, when Sir Austen Chamberlain was Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. In any case, the so-called Reuter communiqué made no reference one way or the other to Italian interests in

Albania, and it was not understood to what particular statement in this communiqué the Italian Government took exception. It was true, however, that mention was made in the communiqué of the undertaking contained in the Anglo-Italian Agreement of the 16th April, 1938, for the maintenance of the *status quo* in the Mediterranean. Was it to be supposed that the Italian Government claimed that Albania was excluded from the scope of this undertaking? Signor Crolla did not know; he was merely carrying out his instructions.

3. The Chargé d'Affaires then said that he was authorised to inform His Majesty's Government exactly as to what was the present position between the Italian and the Albanian Governments. On being asked to do so he proceeded to supply a somewhat different version from the one which Count Ciano supplied to Your Excellency on the 4th April (see your telegram No. 263¹). Signor Crolla's account was as follows:

4. King Zog on the 2nd March had proposed that the treaty relations between the two countries should be brought up to date, and that this should be done by reinforcing the alliance. On the 20th March King Zog asked for Italian troops to be sent to Albania. This request was refused because it seemed, from what the King had suggested, that he had 'ambiguous plans dangerous to Balkan peace'. At this point Signor Crolla was asked to repeat what he had been reading, and on his doing so was asked whether he was not as surprised as was his listener at the statement that King Zog should have asked spontaneously for Italian troops to be sent to Albania. The Chargé d'Affaires made no comment, except to say that he was merely carrying out his instructions.

5. Proceeding with this account, Signor Crolla stated that the Italian Government had concurred in King Zog's desire for the creation of a new Treaty relationship, and with this purpose in mind they had put forward a scheme which was presented by the Italian Minister in Tirana. This scheme did not imply any diminution of the sovereignty, integrity, or independence of Albania, and it was submitted through the normal diplomatic channel, without having the appearance of an ultimatum.

6. After having undertaken to examine this scheme, His Majesty had proceeded, without reason, to mobilise and to concentrate troops in armed bands in Tirana and the Mathi. The Albanian authorities had also started to organise anti-Italian demonstrations by armed bands, and these armed bands had threatened Italian residents in the country. On the other hand, the population itself had showed a cordial attitude towards the Italians and had deplored the action of the Government agents, who apparently had been inspired by the King himself. In this situation, although anxious to continue the conversations in Tirana with a view to reaching a friendly settlement, the Italian Government had felt that they could not tolerate any continuance or aggravation of the situation in which the Italians in Albania had been placed. That was why the development of events was being followed with attention

¹ No. 72.

by the Italian Government and why some concentration of forces had been made in Apulia.

7. Signor Crolla was asked whether it could be assumed that, since no mention was made of any casualties among the Italian population on the occasion of the anti-Italian demonstrations, there had, in fact, been no casualties of any kind. Signor Crolla, however, knew nothing more than was contained in his instructions.

8. Finally, Signor Crolla was asked whether he would answer an indiscreet question, namely, what were the actual terms of the scheme which the Italian Government had put to King Zog? Although this was perhaps no business of His Majesty's Government, he must realise that rumours were current in Albania to the effect that the Italian Government had made most exacting demands on Albania, involving, *inter alia*, the handing over of the Albanian civil service, the army, and the gendarmerie to Italian control, and the stationing of two divisions of Italian troops in Albania, and so forth. If the Italian demands were in reality quite reasonable and moderate, their publication would help to kill these rumours, which naturally were doing a great deal of harm. Once again Signor Crolla said that he had no information beyond the statement which he had been reading.

9. I have sent a copy of this despatch to His Majesty's Representatives at Durazzo, Belgrade, Athens, Sofia, Bucharest, Angora and Paris.

I am, &c.,

HALIFAX

ENCLOSURE IN NO. 88

Text of Reuter Communiqué

While it is not denied that there are indications of military activity in Italy, British official circles in London declare that they have no information to support reports that Italy is concentrating troops at ports lying opposite Albania.

It is stated that the British Government find it difficult to believe that the Italian Government would take action liable to impair the independence or freedom of action of Albania.

It is, moreover, pointed out that anything which did so impair the independence of Albania would violate the Anglo-Italian Agreement, which provided for the maintenance of the *status quo* of national territories in the Mediterranean area.

This provision was laid down in the Anglo-Italian Agreement of the 16th April, 1938, and subsequently implemented on the 16th November, 1938.

Attention is drawn to the reference to Albania in the speech of the King of Italy of the 23rd March, 1939, when he said: 'Particularly friendly are the relations which my Government has established with Albania, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Poland and Switzerland.'

No. 89

The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 8, 11.20 a.m.)

Unnumbered Telegraphic: by telephone [R 2431/1335/90]

ROME, April 8, 1939

Your telegram No. 168.¹

Have you received and considered my telegram No. 288² and if so would you desire to modify in any way terms of your telegram under reference?

¹ No. 86.

² No. 82.

No. 90

Viscount Halifax to the Earl of Perth (Rome)
No. 170 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 2431/1335/90]

FOREIGN OFFICE, April 8, 1939, 6.55 p.m.

Your telegram No. 288.¹

You should at once seek an interview with Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs and state that His Majesty's Government take note of his assurance that the Italian Government fully intend to respect the independence and integrity of Albania and the *status quo* in the Mediterranean area. They are nevertheless gravely concerned at the reports which reach them of the sudden invasion of Albania. His Majesty's Government find it difficult to believe that if the situation between Italy and Albania was such as described to you by His Excellency on April 4 (see your telegram No. 263²) and to a member of this Department by Signor Crolla on April 5 (see my telegram No. 166³) the differences between the two Governments were not capable of solution by negotiation. They find it equally difficult to understand how it is possible to reconcile Italian landings on the Albanian coast with the maintenance of Albania's independence and of the integrity and inalienability of her frontiers, which the Italian Government as well as His Majesty's Government have pledged themselves to regard as a question of international importance. The information at the disposal of His Majesty's Government up till April 4 does not bear out the Italian contention of an Albanian revolt against King Zog's régime, nor have they confirmation of anti-Italian demonstrations in Albania of such a nature as to warrant the severity of the present Italian action. For this reason as well as because the two Governments are equally pledged by the Anglo-Italian Agreement to the preservation of the maintenance of the *status quo* in the Mediterranean area, His Majesty's Government feel that they are entitled to the frankest and fullest explanation not only of present developments in the Italo-Albanian situation and what led up to them but also of the future intentions of the Italian

¹ No. 82.

² No. 72.

³ Not printed. See No. 86, note 3.

Government. The explanations proffered up to date have caused His Majesty's Government profound misgivings as to those intentions and will not satisfy public opinion in this country.

2. In spite of Count Ciano's professions and Signor Mussolini's assurance to the Prime Minister, His Majesty's Government cannot conceal their deep concern at the course which events seem to be taking.

3. You should take occasion to add that certain of His Majesty's ships are now on visit to Italian ports planned to last for two or three more days. In view of the obscurity of the situation and of possible embarrassment to all parties concerned, instructions have been issued to bring these visits to an end forthwith.

4. You should cancel my telegram No. 168⁴ and substitute the foregoing instructions for those contained therein.

⁴ No. 86.

No. 91

Sir S. Waterlow (Athens) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 8, 8.0 p.m.)

No. 113 Telegraphic [R 2446/1335/90]

ATHENS, April 8, 1939, 8.30 p.m.

Greek Government have informed me King Zog arrived at Florina this morning without any warning accompanied by his Prime Minister and other Albanian officials. Absence of advance information was no doubt due to the fact that Greek Government are no longer in communication with the Greek Minister at Tirana. Greek Government have instructed the Greek Minister at Rome to communicate above information at once to Italian Government emphasizing that every precaution is being taken to prevent any political . . .¹ on his part in Greek territory or anything that might be construed as a breach of hospitality given to political refugees. Greek Government are greatly embarrassed and annoyed at this development.

Repeated to Belgrade and Rome.

¹ The text is here uncertain.

No. 92

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)

No. 836 [R 2522/1335/90]

FOREIGN OFFICE, April 8, 1939

Sir,

The French Ambassador asked to see me this afternoon and began by enquiring whether we had any further information about Albania. I told His Excellency that our information was conflicting and somewhat obscure, but that we had had a telegram from Lord Perth,¹ who had seen the Italian

¹ See No. 82.

Foreign Minister yesterday afternoon. At that interview Count Ciano had again repeated that the Italian Government fully intended to respect the independence and integrity of Albania and the *status quo* of the Mediterranean area. He had emphasised that the Italian Government would require a fresh Treaty to be signed between themselves and Albania, giving them certain rights in the protection and development of Italian interests.

2. We had just sent a further telegram to Lord Perth,² instructing him to see Count Ciano again and give further expression to the grave concern with which we were watching developments. We were also instructing him to tell Count Ciano that, with the object of avoiding possible embarrassment on both sides, we were ordering certain ships of His Majesty's Navy at present on visits to Italian ports to leave.

3. The Ambassador said that the French Government had certain news from Yugoslavia which tended to confirm our own information to the effect that the Yugoslav Government did not intend to take any action. In Yugoslav quarters the view had been expressed that the situation in Albania had latterly become worse and that at some point King Zog had made counter-proposals after the receipt of the Italian proposals, which had not been found satisfactory in Rome. The Italian Government had given assurances to the Yugoslav Government that the interests of the latter would be safeguarded; that the Italian Government had in view merely a temporary occupation of Albania, and that they did not intend to establish a real protectorate; Yugoslav policy was to recognise that the Italian action was not discordant with the Italo-Yugoslav Agreement, and that Italy was accordingly prepared to take account of Yugoslav *desiderata*.

4. The Ambassador agreed that it seemed plain that the immediate course of events could only be checked by resort to a general European war, and this he agreed with me in feeling not to be justified. As regards Albania herself, it was obviously difficult to see any effective action to be taken, perhaps in any case, and certainly in face of the attitude of the Yugoslav Government. I expressed the opinion that, on the long view, the right answer might be found to be a tightening-up of mutual obligations of support as between ourselves, on the one hand, and Greece and Turkey.

5. M. Corbin asked me whether we had given consideration to the possibility of doing anything in connexion with the Anglo-Italian Agreement, by which he explained to me that he meant the possible denunciation of it. I said this had naturally occurred to me, but that, on our present information, I thought any decision on the matter was clearly premature. Moreover, it was the fact that we judged ourselves to have been greater beneficiaries under the Agreement than the Italian Government was, and I should think very carefully before throwing away this Agreement, which, with all its obvious weaknesses, yet had been of some service.

6. I mentioned also to M. Corbin that we had had in mind the possibility of withdrawing our Ambassador. Here again, I had felt that we had scarcely sufficient information upon which to base a decision; Lord Perth was, in any

² See No. 90.

case, due to leave in about a fortnight's time,³ and it was always to be remembered that it was a good deal easier to withdraw Ambassadors than to return them to their posts.

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

³ Lord Perth was about to retire from the Diplomatic Service. He left Rome on April 24, and was succeeded as Ambassador by Sir P. Loraine.

No. 93

Viscount Halifax to Sir S. Waterlow (Athens)

No. 124 [R 2435/1335/90]

FOREIGN OFFICE, April 8, 1939

Sir,

The Greek Minister informed the department on the afternoon of April 7 that he had just received a telegram sent on the morning of that day from the Greek Minister at Tirana, to the effect that the Italians had disembarked in Albania and that the Albanians were offering desperate resistance. A battle was raging in the city of Durazzo and it was impossible for him to communicate with His Majesty's Minister who was established there.

2. M. Simopoulos said that the telegram in question had reached him from Yugoslavia and that he felt it incumbent on him to let us know its contents. The Minister was thanked warmly for his courtesy, and was told the facts regarding Sir Andrew Ryan's isolation at Durazzo, which made it all the more welcome to receive information through him from the Greek Minister in Albania.

3. Copies of this despatch are being sent to His Majesty's Representatives at Rome, Angora, Belgrade, Durazzo and Sofia.

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

No. 94

*Viscount Halifax to Sir A. Ryan (Durazzo)*¹

No. 42 [R 2456/1335/90]

FOREIGN OFFICE, April 8, 1939

Sir,

The Albanian Minister came to see me this afternoon. He thanked me for receiving him at this agitated moment in his country's history, but he had received instructions to transmit to me the attached Note from his Government.

2. I read the Note, and observed to M. Kurti that his Government made an appeal to His Majesty's Government to do their utmost to aid them in the

¹ A summary of this conversation, and of the Note left by the Albanian Minister, was telegraphed to Sir A. Ryan at 11.0 p.m. on April 8.

defence of their territory. I assured him that I would acquaint the Prime Minister and my colleagues of the contents of his Note, and that he might be certain that it would receive all the consideration which it merited.

3. I told the Minister that our information as to what had passed in the last thirty-six hours in Albania was both imperfect and obscure. For example, there had been an announcement from Rome to the effect that King Zog had proposed to send plenipotentiaries to negotiate a new Treaty. The Minister replied that he had no information on this point, but regarded it as most improbable. I then told M. Kurti the intention expressed to our Ambassador in Rome by Count Ciano² that the Italian Government would respect both the independence and integrity of Albania, and that Count Ciano seemed to infer that it would be possible to regulate the future of Albania on a basis of this nature with some constituted Albanian authority. M. Kurti was emphatic that there was no possibility of any Agreement of such a nature being reached while Italian troops remained in Albania.

4. In response to a further enquiry of mine, the Minister said that he had no information as to the Yugoslav attitude towards recent developments. His country was very small and had few means of defence, but they were fighting for their honour. If Yugoslavia would come to their aid it would be in the interests of the whole Balkan Peninsula. If the Italians thought that by taking a few Albanian ports and towns in the interior they would ever succeed in reaching a settlement with the Albanians, they laboured under a delusion. The moment they attempted to penetrate the mountains they would be met by guerrilla warfare.

5. Replying to a further question of mine, the Albanian Minister thought that Signor Mussolini's object in invading Albania was to trouble the peace of the world and install himself in the Balkans. He thought, moreover, that it was probable that Signor Mussolini's action had been concerted with Germany. The solidarity and integrity of the Balkan countries was a matter of concern to European peace, and that was why he could have wished that Albania's Balkan neighbours would take a firm stand in support of his country. If such a stand were taken later it might be too late.

6. Finally, M. Kurti, in taking leave, said that he was sure Albania could at least count on the moral support of Great Britain.

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

² See No. 82.

ENCLOSURE IN No. 94

M. Kurti to Viscount Halifax

ROYAL ALBANIAN LEGATION, LONDON, *April 8, 1939*

Your Excellency,

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to bring to Your Excellency's knowledge the following:

The Italian Government, after having tried in vain to force my Govern-

ment to accept certain proposals of which I have not yet the details, but which appear to my Government incompatible with the independence, the sovereignty and the integrity of the country, tried to impose their will by a subsequent ultimatum. To this ultimatum, which was unanimously rejected by the Chamber of Deputies, my Government replied with a clear-cut refusal, whereupon the Italian troops, under cover of an intense bombardment by the navy and of bombing by airplanes, attacked the four Albanian ports of Durazzo, Valona, Sarande¹ and Shengjin² at 4.30 a.m. of the 7th April, 1939.

After a fierce resistance by the Albanian regular forces of the army and the gendarmerie, reinforced by volunteers who came from all parts of the country after a broadcast appeal from His Majesty the King, the invaders succeeded in occupying the four above-mentioned ports thanks to their overwhelming numbers and, above all, to their powerful means of aggression. Nevertheless fighting is continuing everywhere, the whole nation being unanimously resolved to meet the aggressor with the greatest resistance within its power in defending its sacred rights.

In protesting with all the energy and indignation which the tragic events dictate against the action taken by the Fascist Government of Italy, in violation of all international Treaties voluntarily accepted and signed by them, to impose their will so cruelly and unjustly upon my country, I have the honour in the name of my Government to appeal to His Britannic Majesty's Government to do its utmost in aid of a small nation which is desperately trying to defend its own territory.

I have, &c.,

L. KURTI

¹ Santi Quaranta.

² San Giovanni di Medua.

No. 95

Viscount Halifax to the Earl of Perth (Rome)

No. 533 [R 2501/1/22]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 8, 1939*

My Lord,

The Italian Chargé d'Affaires asked me to receive him urgently this evening, Easter Eve, and I accordingly did so after dinner at my own house.

2. Signor Crolla said that he had been especially charged by Signor Mussolini to tell me that the latter had been puzzled by the tone of the British press that morning and by the communiqué issued after the meeting of Ministers which referred to 'some obscurity in the situation.'¹

¹ This communiqué, issued on the afternoon of April 8 after the meeting of Ministers, read as follows: 'The Ministers concerned heard a report summarising the information at present in the possession of the Government as to the position in Albania. The situation is still somewhat obscure in regard to a number of important factors, and it has therefore been arranged that the Ministers concerned should remain in or near London for the present. No further meeting has, however, yet been fixed.'

3. Signor Mussolini accordingly felt that it might be of assistance if he made certain comments with the object of clearing the situation:

- (1) Italian interests had been for a century pre-eminent in Albania and had been expressly recognised by the Conference of Ambassadors;
- (2) The Italians had been engaged in colossal expenditure in Albania: on schools, hospitals, roads, even down to paying for the Albanian military uniforms. The Italian and Albanian budgets had been to some extent interlocked and the expenditure found from Italian sources had not been well administered by the Albanian Government;
- (3) King Zog had betrayed his people, and his flight showed that he did not trust their loyalty. He had got himself into trouble in spite of the fact that the settlement by Treaty that had been offered by Italy (I gathered this referred to the earlier negotiations) provided for the political independence of Albania;
- (4) The help of the Italian Government had been invoked by many elements of the Albanian people against King Zog's misrule, and the Italian Government was publishing letters in this sense from Albanian chieftains;
- (5) The neighbouring countries, Yugoslavia and Greece, were perfectly calm. The Yugoslav Government having received most formal assurances from the Italian Government. It was very clear that Italy was not going to give trouble to neighbouring countries;
- (6) The Anglo-Italian Agreement of last April had suffered no prejudice and was consequently not endangered;
- (7) All Albania was in process of being occupied by the Italian troops, a process which was expected to be completed within a few days with the full consent and welcome of the Albanian people. The general conclusion in Signor Mussolini's opinion was that the situation did not contain elements of danger.

4. So far Signor Crolla had been speaking expressly on behalf of Signor Mussolini; he then proceeded to make certain comments of his own in the light of certain contacts he had had with representatives of the Sunday papers, from which he was able to deduce the line that the several papers might be likely to take. The suggestion would be made:

- (i) that the Anglo-Italian Agreement should be denounced;
- (ii) that Greece and Turkey should receive guarantees from Great Britain;
- (iii) that the British Ambassador should be withdrawn;
- (iv) that the British should occupy Corfu.

5. Signor Crolla was uncertain what would be the reaction of Signor Mussolini and the Italian press to such suggestions. 'Any suggestion of weakening the Anglo-Italian Agreement,' said Signor Crolla, 'would create great surprise in Rome.' As to Corfu, he said: 'We are certainly not going to

threaten Greek independence, and any British occupation of Corfu would create most dangerous reactions.'

6. On this last point I told Signor Crolla at once that he could dismiss from his mind the idea that we had any intention of occupying Corfu—that was not the sort of thing we did, but we should take a very grave view if anybody else occupied it.

7. Signor Crolla then proceeded to develop his own view as to the importance of maintaining the Anglo-Italian Agreement as a bridge between the two camps in Europe and recurred at intervals in his conversation both to this expression of opinion and to the fact that Yugoslavia and Greece were exhibiting no disquiet, which ought in itself to be reassuring to us.

8. I said that I should certainly take note of what he had said and should communicate it to my colleagues, but I must leave him in no doubt as to the view that His Majesty's Government was bound to take in regard to the action of the Italian Government in Albania. Recognising all the Italian special interests, it was surely impossible to argue that if the political position of Albania was to be completely changed, this was not a very vital fact from the point of view of the Anglo-Italian Agreement. British and world opinion would find it very difficult to understand why it had been necessary for the protection of Italian interests to proceed so suddenly to forcible action in contradiction of the assurances given to Your Excellency by Count Ciano on the 4th April² and by Signor Crolla himself on the 5th April to Sir Orme Sargent.³

9. Signor Crolla appeared rather sheepish under these interrogatories and was only able to suggest that circumstances must have altered, and that the record of the British Empire had not been wholly free from blame in the past.

10. As regards the Anglo-Italian Agreement, I said that we had, as he knew, constantly defended this Agreement in the face of some hostile opinion in this country, and Signor Mussolini made the position of His Majesty's Government extremely difficult. His Majesty's Government was certainly not likely to take precipitate action in regard to the Agreement, and we had endeavoured to steady the press until the sequence of events was more clear, but meanwhile in all quarters it was inevitably being said: the Germans invaded Czecho-Slovakia three weeks ago, the Italians now walk into Albania, where is it going to end? And I could not accordingly conceal from him the grave anxiety that His Majesty's Government felt.

11. Signor Crolla finally made a reference to the report in the 'Daily Telegraph' of this morning as to the withdrawal of Italian troops from Spain. He had no doubt that Signor Mussolini would keep the pledges given to us in this matter, but if we denounced the Anglo-Italian Agreement, it was impossible to predict the consequences. I said that spokesmen of His Majesty's Government had constantly for their own part expressed the belief in Signor Mussolini's good faith in regard to his Spanish pledges, and that, indeed, nothing would assist those who wished to promote good relations between

² See No. 72.

³ See No. 88.

Italy and Great Britain more than if these pledges of withdrawal of Italian troops were speedily and thoroughly carried out.

12. The general impression left on my mind by the interview was that while, as always, one feels it necessary to remind oneself of the possibility of such assurances and conversations being in the nature of a smoke screen, the Italian Government were anxious to avoid a rupture or serious prejudices to their relations with this country.

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

No. 96

Letter from Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Sir A. Cadogan
[R 2926/399/22]

BRITISH EMBASSY, PARIS, *April 8, 1939*

Léger asked Campbell to call on him this afternoon in order to tell him the following:

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs had received information from various sources that a further Italian *coup* was imminent with the object of further striking public imagination. Some quarters said Tunis would be attacked, but he thought this highly improbable; others thought Corfu; others Egypt (as to the latter both the Turkish and Egyptian Representatives here had expressed fears; Bonnet told me today that the Greek¹ also fears for Egypt); and others Gibraltar. Léger himself felt that a sudden attack on Gibraltar could not be excluded. The Italians had certainly landed troops at Cadiz, and they were quartered in the neighbourhood of Gibraltar. The French Consul had sent most precise information between March 24 and March 31 of two landings of 1,500 and 2,000 men respectively. He believed His Majesty's Government now had similar information and considered it accurate. He had compared a number of indications which made him think an attack on Gibraltar was probably contemplated:

1. He had noticed Italian insistence on the necessity of assuring to themselves the Eastern and Western gates of the Mediterranean (see enclosures to Jebb's Most Secret letter of March 21 to Campbell²).

2. The value of Ciano's word was clear from his statements to Perth concerning Albania.

3. Ciano's assurance to His Majesty's Government about the despatch of further Italian troops to Spain had been at best disingenuous, since he said that only a few had been sent to ensure the final success of General Franco by the capture of Madrid and that none had been sent since the fall of Madrid. But the landings referred to must have been ordered when Madrid's capitulation was a certainty and when negotiations for it were already in progress.

¹ The word 'Minister' or 'Government' appears to have been omitted.

² This letter cannot be traced in the Foreign Office archives.

4. (For what it was worth) recruits from the Barcelona district were being sent to the neighbourhood of Gibraltar and one of their officers had told them they were destined for great events.

5. General Franco's policy was anything but satisfactory (e.g. signature of Anti-Comintern Pact which was only a façade for something far more extensive; refusal of Franco to renew to M. Bérard³ the assurance of Spanish neutrality in case of war; his reserved reception of Marshal Pétain's expression of hope that France would not have to regret the return of Spanish war-ships; fortification of Spanish side of frontier between French and Spanish zones in Morocco, and bad impression made on General Noguès by Colonel Beigbeder⁴). The Spanish Government was, he thought, much further committed to Italy and Germany than we had believed.

6. (And most secret and personal) a recent conversation had been overheard between the Italian Ambassador and Counsellor here to the effect that official information just received from Rome was that an attack was to be made on Gibraltar; and that if Franco himself proved hesitant, the Italians had the necessary troops with which to make the operation, and thus force Spain in with them. This information came from [an Italian source].⁵

Léger did not however pretend to judge whether an attack on Gibraltar was in fact imminent or whether it was rather intended to be made only in the case of a general conflagration. He admitted the possibility that the landing of Italian troops at Cadiz and other minor indications, coupled with rumours about a further *coup* being imminent, might have led informants to report that the imminent *coup* was an attack on Gibraltar. There might be some confusion here, but he gave Campbell this information 'par acquit de conscience'. It was for His Majesty's Government to judge, but he thought it would be unwise to take too optimistic a view.⁶

Yours ever,

ERIC PHIPPS

P.S. Bonnet again today rubbed in to me how much he feared an Italian attack on Egypt, owing to the notorious weakness of that country.

E. P.

³ M. Léon Bérard visited Burgos in February 1939 for discussions with General Franco's Government before the recognition of the government by France.

⁴ The reference is uncertain. General Noguès was Resident-General in French Morocco, Colonel Beigbeder was High Commissioner in Spanish Morocco.

⁵ A personal reference is here omitted.

⁶ The Foreign Office did not at this time regard a further act of aggression by Italy outside the Adriatic area as imminent. The existing land armaments within range of Gibraltar did not offer a serious threat except to shipping in day-time. It would, however, have been possible for an aggressor to bring up heavy mobile artillery to attack the fortress and dock area.

No. 97

Sir S. Waterlow (Athens) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 9, 8.30 a.m.)

No. 115 and 116 Telegraphic [R 2454/1877/19]

ATHENS, April 9, 1939, 2.30 a.m.

Prime Minister sent for me at midnight and gave me following information.

Greek Military Attaché at Rome has learnt from reliable source that Italians intend to attack Corfu between April 10 and April 12. Same source foretold date of invasion of Albania.

Greek Government have received same information independently by telephone from their own representative at Geneva who does not give precise date but says that it comes from source in touch with Italian General Staff.

Prime Minister made no appeal to me but was deeply moved and clearly hopes for immediate indication of our intentions. He said he had made all preparations to resist to the utmost and at the cost of all sacrifices. This of course would mean that Italian action would be extended to the whole of Greece.

He considers that the Axis Powers have taken the bit between their teeth. Repeated to Commander-in-Chief Mediterranean.¹

¹ Repeated to Rome by the Foreign Office as telegram No. 174.

No. 98

Viscount Halifax to the Earl of Perth (Rome)

No. 175 Telegraphic [R 2454/1877/19]

FOREIGN OFFICE, April 9, 1939, 11.30 a.m.

My immediately preceding telegram.¹

Please telegraph comments of Service Attachés and repeat Athens and Commander-in-Chief Mediterranean.

¹ This telegram repeated to Rome, Athens telegrams Nos. 115 and 116 (No. 97).

No. 99

Viscount Halifax to the Earl of Perth (Rome)

No. 177 Telegraphic [R 2475/1877/19]

FOREIGN OFFICE, April 9, 1939, 4.0 p.m.

My immediately preceding telegram.¹

You should at once see Count Ciano and inform him of the conversations I had with Italian Chargé d'Affaires here last night and this morning. Since Italian Ambassador is not here, I feel it desirable, in addition to report which

¹ No. 101. These telegrams were despatched in reverse order.

Italian Chargé d'Affaires will no doubt make to his Government, that you should give Count Ciano directly account of what passed between us, as I regard it as of the utmost importance that there should be no possibility of misunderstanding as to the general attitude of His Majesty's Government, particularly in the event of Italian action against Corfu or any other Greek territory.

Repeated to Athens, Belgrade, Paris, Durazzo and Angora.

No. 100

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)

No. 139 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 2475/1877/19]

FOREIGN OFFICE, April 9, 1939, 4.15 p.m.

I should be glad if you would see M. Bonnet and if possible M. Daladier simultaneously at once and inform them of the conversations referred to in my telegram No. 176¹ to Rome.

2. His Majesty's Government have no doubt that the French Government will be in close accord with the attitude I took in conversation with the Italian Chargé d'Affaires. If Italian assurances in regard to Corfu are belied and if Italian Government commits any act of aggression against Greece, I have little doubt that His Majesty's Government would wish to give full support to Greece in resistance. I should be glad to know urgently whether, should the situation so develop, we can feel assured that the French Government would be disposed to take a similar view and action.

Repeated to Rome, Athens, Belgrade, Durazzo and Angora.

¹ No. 101.

No. 101

Viscount Halifax to the Earl of Perth (Rome)

No. 176 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 2475/1877/19]

FOREIGN OFFICE, April 9, 1939, 4.40 p.m.

Italian Chargé d'Affaires told me last night¹ on the authority of Signor Mussolini that one of the elements of reassurance in present situation was that Yugoslavia and Greece were perfectly calm and that it was accordingly clear that Italy was not going to give trouble to neighbouring countries.

2. Subsequently in the conversation, speaking for himself, Signor Crolla said that Italian Government was certainly not going to threaten Greek independence but that British occupation of Corfu which he had reason to think might be suggested in the press would create most dangerous reactions.

3. I told him that I could give him ready assurance that nothing of this

¹ For a fuller account of this conversation, see above, No. 95.

sort was in our minds, but that we should take a grave view if anybody else occupied Corfu.

4. Chargé d'Affaires came to see me again this morning² to convey further messages from Signor Mussolini concerning Italian intentions in Albania and withdrawal of Italian troops from Spain. He was further charged to say that a possible crisis in Anglo-Italian relations would be deplorable and that 'le jeu ne valait pas la chandelle' of Anglo-Italian relations.

5. In accepting these assurances I reminded Chargé d'Affaires of what he had, on the authority of Signor Mussolini, said to me last night concerning absence of anxiety in Yugoslavia and Greece. Since I saw him, however, last night, I had received reports from Greek Government³ showing that they were by no means free from anxiety and had some reason to anticipate almost immediate occupation of Corfu by Italian Government.

6. Italian Chargé d'Affaires said this was the first time he had ever heard a hint of such action and had no hesitation in saying that in his view it was absolutely impossible that it should be correct as it would be in plain contradiction to what, on the authority of the Duce, he had said to me last night. On his own responsibility he could give me an assurance that such was not the Italian intention.

7. I told the Chargé d'Affaires that I was naturally pleased to have his personal assurance, which was what I expected, but it was right to leave him in no doubt that if any action of the sort were ever in contemplation, it must be a matter of the gravest concern to His Majesty's Government. It was quite vital that there should be no misunderstanding between our two Governments on this point. I accordingly begged the Chargé d'Affaires, in reporting our conversation to Count Ciano, to be particularly careful to report what I had said on this point. I added that I should be glad to know that the Italian Government made their own the assurances that the Chargé d'Affaires had just given to me on his own responsibility, and I said that it would be of great value if the same assurances could be immediately repeated by the Italian Government to the Greek Government.

8. With regard to what Signor Mussolini had said as to a possible crisis in Anglo-Italian relations, I told Signor Crolla that he could assure Count Ciano that His Majesty's Government would do everything to assist the maintenance of the good relations between themselves and the Italian Government. It was therefore of vital importance not only that there should be no misunderstanding regarding our attitude towards a possible occupation of Corfu, but also that neither Government should take up a position that would jeopardise the continuance of the Anglo-Italian Agreement. The Italian Chargé d'Affaires said that he had already reported to his Government that he felt that this was the general feeling animating His Majesty's Government and I begged him to report as frankly and clearly as possible what I had said.

Repeated to Paris, Athens, Durazzo, Belgrade, Angora and Sofia.

² For a fuller account of this conversation, see below, No. 109.

³ See No. 97.

No. 102

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora), Sir S. Waterlow (Athens), Sir R. Campbell (Belgrade), Mr. Rendel (Sofia), Sir R. Hoare (Bucharest) and Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw)

No. 85¹ Telegraphic [R 2475/1877/19]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 9, 1939, 7.20 p.m.*

My telegram No. 176 to Rome.²

You should communicate to the Government to which you are accredited a summary of paragraphs 1 to 7 of my telegram under reference for their confidential information.

(To Athens only.)

Greek Minister here has been informed.

¹ No. 85 to Angora, No. 98 to Athens, No. 81 to Belgrade, No. 48 to Sofia, No. 97 to Bucharest, No. 85 to Warsaw.

² No. 101.

No. 103

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 9, 8.45 p.m.)*

No. 155 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 2476/1877/19]

PARIS, *April 9, 1939*

Your telegram No. 139.¹

I saw at 7 o'clock this evening M. Daladier and M. Bonnet, who left a National Defence Committee to receive me.

I read them slowly in French your telegrams Nos. 176² and 177³ to Rome.

M. Daladier said that the French Government entirely approved Your Lordship's attitude. He said solemnly that if Corfu or any other points of Greek territory were attacked and Great Britain helped Greece to resist, the French Government would also help and would declare war on Italy.

M. Daladier does not now believe any Italian assurances. He feels that we have to do with gangsters who merely seek to throw dust in our eyes.

Both he and M. Bonnet consider the attitude of Yugoslavia as sinister; they think she has already thrown in her lot with the dictators, who will end by dividing her between themselves.

Repeated to Rome, Athens, Belgrade, Durazzo and Angora.

¹ No. 100.

² No. 101.

³ No. 99.

The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 9, 11.0 p.m.)

No. 304 Telegraphic [R 2489/1335/90]

ROME, April 9, 1939, 9.20 p.m.

Your telegram No. 170.¹

1. I saw Minister for Foreign Affairs who had just returned from Tirana this morning and communicated to him *aide-mémoire* in the terms of paragraphs 1 and 2 of your telegram under reference, though in the following slightly changed text of paragraph 2, and used the following wording: 'Although His Majesty's Government have taken note of assurances given by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and also by Signor Mussolini to the Prime Minister, there are nevertheless, etc.'

2. I began the conversation by telling Count Ciano that I had feared the violent action of the Italian Government had aroused great feeling in my own country. Having read memorandum he said he did not quite understand what its point was. I replied that I thought it was self-explanatory; but for instance I thought my Government would like to know what were the conditions which the Italian Government had demanded of King Zog. Did they, for instance, amount in fact to an Italian protectorate and above all what were Italian intentions as regards the future bearing in mind the definite pledges and assurances given?

3. Minister for Foreign Affairs skated over the first question and proceeded to the second which seems to me to be by far of greater importance. His reply was that the answer would depend on the wishes of the Albanian people. He showed me a telegram which had been drafted in his absence by Signor Mussolini himself giving instructions to Italian Chargé d'Affaires in London with reference to conversation which I understood Your Lordship had with him yesterday.²

4. I said while it might well be true Anglo-Italian friendship was from a world point of view far more important than the Albanian question, there still remained the assurances given and I felt that my Government would be most anxious to know how it was intended to implement these. On my pressing Minister for Foreign Affairs strongly he confirmed assurances about the independence and integrity of Albania, about the respect of its present boundaries and about the *status quo* in the Mediterranean area. As for future developments he observed that a provisional Government composed of Albanians would be set up either today or tomorrow and we must await results of its deliberations. He remarked that he had been welcomed with enthusiasm in Tirana. Chiefs of tribes had come from the mountains to express their gratitude for abolition of King Zog's régime and Italians had been generally welcomed with enthusiasm.

5. Most noteworthy factor was hatred of King Zog which had been universally expressed. The only buildings which had been destroyed by

¹ No. 90.

² See No. 95.

Albanians themselves had been Royal Palaces. There had been no looting of these but simply destruction. Stories about the bombardment of Durazzo, repulse of Italian troops, &c., had been broadcasted from Tirana by King Zog's instructions and were totally untrue.

6. Minister for Foreign Affairs remarked that Yugoslav Government which was intimately concerned with Albania had taken Italian move with calm. He sincerely trusted that nothing would be done by His Majesty's Government which could be represented as interference with legitimate Italian interests and he expressed his confidence in Prime Minister on this point.

7. I replied that this was an utterly mistaken attitude. We in no way wished to interfere with Italian interests but what mattered to my Government and to public opinion was that, particularly at present juncture, assurances given and treaties signed would not be violated. I emphasized this point most strongly and urged the Minister for Foreign Affairs, who was clearly uncomfortable and indeed got somewhat red in the face, to explain it to Signor Mussolini as it was essential that it should be plainly understood. You will no doubt realize that it is a point of view that is difficult for anyone of Italian mentality to grasp and I therefore pressed it with all the force which I could command.

8. Reverting to instructions sent to Italian Chargé d'Affaires, he remarked that there were today two problems between Italy and Great Britain; the first in the East, namely, Albania; the second Spain. Lord Halifax had told Signor Crolla that it would be most helpful for British public opinion if Italian troops could now be withdrawn from Spain. To this Signor Mussolini had replied that this was being arranged and would be effected as soon as victory parade had taken place (see my telegram No. 294³). On my enquiring date of parade Minister for Foreign Affairs replied that he was not quite certain but he thought it would be about April 20. I asked whether withdrawal of troops would comprise evacuation of Balearic Islands. Minister for Foreign Affairs replied that there were no Italian forces in the Islands. I remarked that there were, however, aeroplanes and pilots there. He replied that when troops were withdrawn these would also go.

9. Finally on his insisting on vital interests of Italians in Albania I said that while I understood this it seemed to me that any permanent occupation of the country could with difficulty be reconciled with Albania's independence since a country could hardly be termed independent if it were occupied by foreign troops. To this Count Ciano riposted that Egypt was independent but that there were considerable numbers of British troops stationed there. I am inclined to believe the present Italian idea is to conclude with Albania a treaty on Egyptian analogy. In this connexion he remarked that while Italy would not yield the substance she would observe the form.

³ The reference appears to be to Rome telegram No. 292 of April 8. In this telegram Lord Perth reported a statement by Count Ciano to the United States Ambassador that the Italian Government were thinking of withdrawing their troops from Spain but that they would not do so until after a victory parade in Madrid in 'three or four weeks time'.

10. I finally communicated to Minister for Foreign Affairs verbally that visit of His Majesty's ships to Italian ports would be brought to an end forthwith. Minister for Foreign Affairs enquired whether this had any ulterior significance and I replied that order had been given with a view to avoiding any possible embarrassment to our two Governments.⁴

⁴ Lord Perth was informed on April 13 that his language to Count Ciano reported in paragraphs 7 and 8 of this telegram was approved.

No. 105

Viscount Halifax to Sir S. Waterlow (Athens)

No. 99 Telegraphic [R 2475/1877/19]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 9, 1939, 9.30 p.m.*

My telegram No. 176 to Rome.¹

Italian Chargé d'Affaires called again this evening² to inform me that as a result of the account he had given his Government of his conversation with me this morning, he had now been instructed by Signor Mussolini to state that he (Signor Mussolini) had given the most ample assurance to the Greek Government confirming that Fascist Italy intended to base her relations with Greece on a cordial and solid friendship, and that new instructions had been sent to the Italian Chargé d'Affaires in Athens to give assurances to that Government that all rumours concerning Italian hostile intentions towards Greece were false inasmuch as Italy intended to respect in the most absolute manner the territorial and insular integrity of Greece.

(To all except Durazzo, Athens and Rome.)

You should pass on the foregoing to the Government to which you are accredited for their confidential information.

(To Athens only.)

Please inform Greek Minister for Foreign Affairs of the foregoing without delay.

Repeated to Rome, Paris, Durazzo, Belgrade, Angora, Bucharest, Sofia and Warsaw.

¹ No. 101.

² For a fuller account of this conversation see No. 110.

No. 106

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax

(Received April 9, 9.45 p.m.)

No. 156 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 2527/661/67]

PARIS, *April 9, 1939*

My immediately preceding telegram.¹

M. Daladier said he had good reason to believe that the Albanian *coup* was merely . . .² prelude to a big Italo-German offensive from the North Sea

¹ No. 103.

² The text is here uncertain.

to Egypt. Source that had so far always been accurate, and had foretold the occupation of Prague several days beforehand, announced that a German attack against Poland or possibly against the West was fairly imminent. More and more German troops and experts were pouring into Italy.

M. Daladier told me in strict confidence that National Defence Committee, which was still sitting when I arrived at the Ministry of War, had this evening decided:

- (i) To bring greater part of French Atlantic Fleet into the Mediterranean;
- (ii) To send greater part of French military aviation in the direction of Italy, which it is felt can be bombarded more easily than Germany.

- (iii) To send further reinforcements to Tunis and French Somaliland.

M. Daladier and M. Bonnet said that if arms and ammunition were supplied to the Abyssinians, in the event of war, by Great Britain and France, a serious revolt might easily break out and the 80,000 Italian troops there might be cut off.

- (iv) All military schools are closed in order that all officers . . .² may be immediately available. All officers and men on leave have been recalled.

- (v) The French Navy is to all intents and purposes mobilised.

Both Ministers feel great fear of a *coup* against Gibraltar with disastrous results; they also fear that defences of Egypt are unduly weak.

They feel even more strongly that it would be a very grave error to send even part of the British Fleet to the Far East. The vital point for Great Britain and France is now the Mediterranean. If that is lost, all is lost, whereas if we are victorious in Europe we can make good later on any temporary defeat we may suffer in the Far East. Moreover the French have 100,000 men in Indo-China. These and . . .² should keep Japan pretty busy. Italy can and should be smashed in the early stages of a war and our vital lines of communication assured.

² The text is here uncertain.

No. 107 .

The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax

(Received April 10, 8.30 a.m.)

No. 308 Telegraphic [R 2482/1877/19]

ROME, April 9, 1939, 11.0 p.m.

Your telegram No. 176.¹

Count Ciano informed me by telephone that the Italian Chargé d'Affaires had received instructions to convey to you at once formal assurances from Signor Mussolini as regards Italian attitude towards Greece and withdrawal of Italian troops from Spain.

Count Ciano expressed himself as greatly pleased with conversations you had with Signor Crolla.

¹ No. 101.

No. 108

The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 10, 8.30 a.m.)

No. 309 *Telegraphic* [R 2483/1877/19]

ROME, April 9, 1939, 11.45 p.m.

Your telegram No. 177.¹

In view of information contained in my immediately preceding telegram² it would appear that Italian Chargé d'Affaires sent to Rome a full report of his conversation with you and that the results have been satisfactory.

This being so it would, I think, be no use again to approach Minister for Foreign Affairs on the subject and I therefore propose to take no action on telegram under reference.³

¹ No. 99.

² No. 107.

³ Lord Perth was instructed on April 10 that his proposal to take no action was approved.

No. 109

Viscount Halifax to the Earl of Perth (Rome)

No. 535 [R 2525/1/22]

FOREIGN OFFICE, April 9, 1939

Sir [My Lord],

The Italian Chargé d'Affaires came to see me this morning at 11.30 with a further message from Signor Mussolini.

2. Signor Crolla stated that the Duce had now read the account which he had sent of his interview with me last night. Signor Mussolini was, therefore, anxious that I should be informed of the following points:

- (a) That the occupation of the whole of Albania was taking place peacefully without bloodshed, and, on the contrary, amidst the enthusiasm of the whole population. The Italian Government were giving immediate help to the Albanian population, whom they had found in a state of absolute starvation.
- (b) That the future status of Albania would have a character conforming with the juridical traditions of Rome.
- (c) That the Italians were organising the withdrawal of their volunteers, who would come back from Spain after having taken part in the military parade which the Caudillo was preparing to hold in Madrid.
- (d) That a possible crisis in Anglo-Italian relations would be indeed deplorable. He was instructed to say to Lord Halifax that 'le jeu albanais ne vaut pas la chandelle' of the relations between Italy and Great Britain, who are neighbours in so many parts of the globe.

3. I told the Chargé d'Affaires that I was grateful for this message and

would immediately place it in the possession of the Prime Minister. I observed that last night Signor Crolla had said that one of the elements in the situation to which Signor Mussolini had drawn attention was that Yugoslavia and Greece were calm, that formal assurances had been given to Yugoslavia, and that this was good evidence that the Italian Government was not going to give trouble to neighbouring countries. Since I had seen him, however, I had information that the Greek Government were very anxious and uneasy in view of reports that were in circulation that the Italian Government intended to occupy Corfu.

4. Signor Crolla said that this was the first time that he had ever heard a hint of such action, and had no hesitation in saying that in his view it was absolutely impossible that it should be correct, since it would be in plain contradiction to what, on the authority of the Duce, he had said to me last night. On his own responsibility he could give me an assurance that such was not the Italian intention. Corfu was a vital strategical point and the Italian Government could not allow a foreign occupation, other than Greek, of the island. In his opinion rumours which were perturbing the Greeks must be the reaction of the current rumours of the British intention to occupy the island.

5. I told the Chargé d'Affaires that I was naturally pleased to have his personal assurance, which was what I expected, but it was right to leave him in no doubt that, if any Italian action of the sort were ever in contemplation, it must be a matter of the gravest concern to His Majesty's Government. It was quite vital that there should be no misunderstanding between our two Governments on this point. I accordingly begged him, in reporting our conversation to Count Ciano, to be particularly careful to report what I had said on this point. I added that I should be glad to know that the Italian Government made their own the assurances which he had just given to me on his own responsibility, and I said that it would be of great value if the same assurances could immediately be repeated by the Italian Government to the Greek Government.

6. With regard to what Signor Mussolini had said as to a possible crisis in Anglo-Italian relations, I told Signor Crolla that he could assure Count Ciano that His Majesty's Government would do everything to assist the maintenance of the good relations between themselves and the Italian Government. It was therefore of vital importance not only that there should be no misunderstandings regarding our attitude towards a possible occupation of Corfu, but also that neither Government should take up an attitude which would jeopardise the continuance of the Anglo-Italian Agreement. The Italian Chargé d'Affaires said that he had already reported to his Government that he felt that, although His Majesty's Government and the British public were taking a very serious view of the situation, His Majesty's Government were, nevertheless, working for the cause of Anglo-Italian agreement, and that it was really, therefore, our genuine wish that the Agreement should survive. I assured him that we would persevere in our endeavour to maintain the Agreement; that was why it was so essential that there should

be no misunderstanding regarding our attitude with regard to Corfu. I begged him, therefore, to report as frankly and clearly as possible what I had said.

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

No. 110

Viscount Halifax to the Earl of Perth (Rome)

No. 534 [R 2502/1/22]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 9, 1939*

Sir [My Lord],

Signor Crolla called again this afternoon at 5.45 p.m. with a further message from Signor Mussolini covering the following three points:

- (a) The Duce confirmed that all the Italian volunteers would be withdrawn from Spain immediately after the great parade which was to take place in Madrid. This decision would be made public at an early date.
- (b) The Duce had already given the most ample assurances to the Greek Government confirming that Fascist Italy intended to base her relations with Greece on a cordial and solid friendship. New instructions had been sent to the Italian Chargé d'Affaires in Athens to give assurances to the Greek Government that all rumours concerning Italian hostile intentions towards Greece were false, inasmuch as Italy intended to respect in the most absolute manner the territorial and insular integrity of Greece.
- (c) The Duce warmly appreciated the cordial attitude of His Majesty's Government, which would contribute to a further consolidation of the ties existing between the two countries. The Duce also expressed the hope that this attitude would reflect itself in the British press, which must recognise the great mission of civilisation and justice which Fascist Italy is carrying out in Albania with the enthusiastic consent of the Albanian population.

2. I expressed to Signor Crolla my gratitude to the Duce for having acted so promptly in repeating his assurances to the Greek Government. I felt that this was a valuable contribution. I was equally obliged to himself for having so quickly placed himself in touch with his Government with such useful results. I told him that I could not conceal from him that he must expect a strong reaction in the British press with respect to Italian action in Albania. I had already expressed my own feelings on that subject to him last night. The sooner it was possible to proclaim Italian intentions as to the future political status of Albania, which I hoped would have regard to the strength of world opinion, the better. I had felt bound at all times to look at the broad effects of these events, and I could not conceal from him that, as I had said last night, strong feeling had been released in many countries, who regarded

what had been done as little calculated to diminish the European tension which it was the desire of us all to ensure.

3. I told the Italian Chargé d'Affaires that it was likely that Parliament would meet in the course of next week and that it would be helpful, if the need arose, that we should be able to refer to Signor Mussolini's assurances as regards Albania, Corfu and Spain. Signor Crolla thought that there would be no difficulty, but he promised to make enquiries.

4. Speaking personally, the Chargé d'Affaires then observed that Signor Mussolini had given prompt replies to all questions put to him both as regards Albania, neighbouring States, and Anglo-Italian relations, and he (Signor Crolla) could not help wondering whether some correspondingly prompt assurance could not be given to the Italian Government. I enquired what were the subjects upon which such assurances might be desired. Signor Crolla replied, emphasising that he was speaking purely personally, that it would be most useful to Signor Mussolini to have some assurance that the Anglo-Italian Agreement would remain in force. I told the Chargé d'Affaires that he could certainly inform Signor Mussolini that His Majesty's Government had no desire other than to secure the best value they could from the Anglo-Italian Agreement, to which they had always attached the greatest importance. It had been concluded in the face of opposition and it was being maintained in the face of opposition. It was therefore only natural that we should attach importance to securing the greatest value we could in the direction of maintaining friendly relations between our two countries. Great Britain, just as every other country in the world, had, of course, vital points of interest, but he could assure Signor Mussolini that there was nothing further from the thoughts of the Prime Minister or His Majesty's Government than to do anything which would impede the maintenance of European peace, the reference to which by Signor Mussolini, in a recent speech, had been duly noted. Although the possible¹ occupation of a State with a coast-line on the Mediterranean must appear to British opinion very difficult to reconcile with the article in the Anglo-Italian Agreement regarding the maintenance of the *status quo* in the Mediterranean area, that was a different thing from saying that His Majesty's Government did not wish, as indeed it was their intention, to exert their best efforts to obtain from the Anglo-Italian Agreement an improvement in the relations between the two countries and to ensure their collaboration in the cause of peace.

5. Again speaking personally, Signor Crolla expressed a hope that, when it became a question of the new status of Albania, His Majesty's Government would not create difficulties about recognition. I told Signor Crolla that I was bound to reserve judgment on this point. The Italian Government had given certain assurances a few days ago that they had no wish whatever to change the *status quo* in Albania, nor to diminish its sovereignty, integrity or independence. It would therefore be of great value to the world that the future status to be accorded to Albania should conform with those assurances

¹ In a telegram (not printed) of April 10 to Lord Perth summarizing this interview the words used at this point are 'forcible occupation'.

and should be something that could properly be described as political independence.

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

No. 111

Viscount Halifax to Sir S. Waterlow (Athens)

No. 129 [R 2524/1877/19]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 9, 1939*

Sir,

The Greek Minister called on me this morning at 11.15 a.m. He stated that he assumed that what he was going to say had already been passed on to me by yourself. He then proceeded to give me the information contained in your telegram No. 115¹ of the 9th April. He was instructed to point out that Greece was going to resist by arms any Italian attack, and would be glad to know the attitude which His Majesty's Government intended to follow.

2. I told M. Simopoulos that I would at once see the Prime Minister and hoped to give him information later in the day on this question, the urgency of which I fully recognised. I undertook to go over to see the Prime Minister there and then in order that no time might be wasted.

3. I told M. Simopoulos that the Italian Chargé d'Affaires, whom I had seen last night, had said that Greece and Yugoslavia were calm, and that it was therefore clear that Italy would create no trouble for the countries neighbouring Albania. The Minister observed that it was difficult to place much faith in Italian assurances. I then informed him of Signor Crolla's reference to the possibility that His Majesty's Government might occupy Corfu. He had stated that the Italian Government had no intention of threatening Greek independence, but if Great Britain occupied Corfu a grave situation would arise. I had replied that it was not in our character to take action of that nature, but that we on our part should take a very grave view if anyone else occupied the island. The Greek Minister told me that the island was not fortified in view of the stipulations laid down when it was handed over in the last century by His Majesty's Government to Greece.

4. M. Simopoulos then informed me of a message he had learned late yesterday afternoon from Reuter's, which, however, the latter were not going to publish, to the effect that they had had information from German sources that the Italians intended to occupy Corfu.²

¹ No. 97.

² After seeing the Greek Minister and learning of the rumours of possible Italian action against Corfu, the Secretary of State instructed the Southern Department to draft a telegram warning the Italian Government against such action for immediate despatch to Signor Mussolini from the Prime Minister. The draft was as follows:

'I was glad to learn last night from Italian Chargé d'Affaires that your Government had no intention of threatening Greek independence. Signor Crolla referred to rumours that

5. The Greek Minister then proceeded to inform me of King Zog's arrival at Florina and of the instructions sent to the Greek Minister at Rome as recounted in your telegram No. 113.³

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

His Majesty's Government might occupy Corfu, and that if this occurred your Government would take a grave view of the situation.

'I should like you to know as soon and as clearly as possible the position of His Majesty's Government in this matter.

'His Majesty's Government have no intention of occupying Corfu, but a situation of the gravest nature would arise if it were occupied by the Italian Government. Any Italian act of aggression upon Greek territory would be regarded by His Majesty's Government as a threat to vital British interests and treated as such.'

While the Secretary of State was considering this draft the Italian Chargé d'Affaires was announced (for the record of this conversation see Nos. 105 and 110). In view of Signor Crolla's assurances, the Secretary of State went to see the Prime Minister at No. 10 Downing Street. The Prime Minister agreed that the telegram should not be despatched.

³ No. 91.

No. 112

Viscount Halifax to Sir S. Waterlow (Athens)

No. 130 [R 2526/1877/19]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 9, 1939*

Sir,

As I was otherwise engaged this afternoon, I asked the Greek Minister to call on a member of the Department in order that he might know what had passed between me and the Italian Chargé d'Affaires this morning, as recounted in my despatch to Rome of today's date.¹

M. Simopoulos accordingly called at the Foreign Office at 4 p.m. this afternoon, and was told that I had reminded Signor Crolla of what he had said last night concerning the absence of anxiety in Yugoslavia and Greece, and that I had told him that in the interim I had received reports from the Greek Government showing that they were by no means free from anxiety, particularly with regard to the possible immediate occupation of Corfu by the Italian Government.

Signor Crolla had said that this was the first hint he had heard of the possibility of any such action, and had no hesitation in saying that it was absolutely impossible that the rumour should be correct, as it was in plain contradiction with what, on the authority of the Duce, he had told me last night, and on his own responsibility he had then proceeded to give me an assurance that such was not the Italian intention. The Greek Minister was then told that I had replied to Signor Crolla that, while I was naturally pleased to have his personal assurance in this matter, it was right to leave him (Signor Crolla) in no doubt that if any action of the sort were ever in contemplation, it must be a matter of the gravest concern to His Majesty's

¹ No. 109.

Government. In fact, I had said, it was quite vital that there should be no misunderstanding between the Italian and His Majesty's Governments on this point. M. Simopoulos was also told that I had asked the Italian Chargé d'Affaires to secure from his Government a confirmation of the personal assurances he had given me on his own responsibility, and that I had suggested to him that it would be of great value if similar assurances could be immediately given by the Italian to the Greek Government.

M. Simopoulos, after expressing his thanks for this information, gave it as his personal view that it could hardly be regarded as an answer to the Greek Government. He was told that if he read between the lines of the answer, it should go a long way to reassuring his Government. The important thing was that the Italian Government should know here and now exactly what the implications were of any possible intention on their part to attack Corfu; in view of the language which had been held to the Italian Chargé d'Affaires and which His Majesty's Ambassador in Rome had been instructed to repeat to Count Ciano, it was felt that the Italian Government could be under no illusions as to the British standpoint.

M. Simopoulos asked that his personal reactions should be conveyed to me and that I should consider the desirability of saying something to the Bulgarian Government, which might cause them to pause in the event of their contemplating taking advantage of the present situation.²

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

² Mr. Rendel (Sofia) was instructed on April 9 to inform the Bulgarian Government of the statement made to the Italian Government about Corfu, and of the assurances which Signor Mussolini was in consequence giving to Greece. See Nos. 103 and 105.

No. 113

The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 10, 2.55 p.m.)
No. 310 Telegraphic [R 2500/1877/19]

ROME, April 10, 1939, 1.0 p.m.

Your telegram No. 175.¹

Naval Attaché is, as you know, still in Durazzo and Air Attaché on his way to Athens. Military Attaché and I consider military, naval and air forces concentrated at Bari and Brindisi would be sufficient for an attack on Corfu if Greek forces were alone involved. In view, however, of formal assurances sent to you last night through Italian Chargé d'Affaires from Signor Mussolini himself that he has no aggressive intentions whatever against Greece and that he is informing Greek Government accordingly, I cannot believe any such attack is contemplated.

Repeated to Athens and Commander-in-Chief [? Mediterranean].

¹ No. 98.

No. 114

Sir S. Waterlow (Athens) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 10, 1.20 p.m.)
No. 118 Telegraphic [R 2503/1877/19]

ATHENS, April 10, 1939, 2.15 p.m.

Italian Chargé d'Affaires yesterday gave to Greek Government personal message from Signor Mussolini thanking Greek Government for their attitude as regards King Zog (which is that they cannot refuse hospitality to him as a refugee but they undertake that he shall refrain from political activities on Greek territory) and speaking of desire of Italy for good relations with Greece both now and in the future. This appears to be result of your conversation with Italian Chargé d'Affaires in London on April 7.¹

Repeated to Rome.

¹ See No. 81.

No. 115

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 10, 3.45 p.m.)
No. 158 Telegraphic [R 2528/661/67]

PARIS, April 10, 1939, 2.20 p.m.

My telegram No. 156.¹

Whilst I was with M. Bonnet this morning he was informed by General Staff that one million one hundred thousand men were mobilised in Italy and that half a million more were being called to the colours.

German troop movements were reported as taking place towards Poland.

M. Bonnet again expressed great misgivings regarding our intention to send ships to the Far East. He said that the French Government considered this 'catastrophic'. Bad news had been received about Gibraltar, and if that were lost it might be impossible to move our ships in or out of the Mediterranean. The war, if it came, would be won in Europe. Italy was the weak spot of the Axis and if we could inflict a crushing blow upon her in early days of the conflict it would ensure our general victory.

¹ No. 106.

No. 116

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)
No. 142 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 2483/1877/19]

FOREIGN OFFICE, April 10, 1939, 4.15 p.m.

My telegram No. 177 to Rome.¹

I am satisfied that accurate account of my conversations with Italian Chargé d'Affaires has already been transmitted to Count Ciano. Instruc-

¹ No. 99.

tions to Lord Perth in my telegram under reference have therefore been cancelled.

Repeated to Athens, Belgrade, Durazzo and Angora.

No. 117

Sir S. Waterlow (Athens) to Viscount Halifax

(Received April 10, 4.30 p.m.)

No. 119 Telegraphic [R 2504/1877/19]

ATHENS, April 10, 1939, 5.10 p.m.

Your telegram No. 99.¹

I have informed Prime Minister of contents.

Italian Chargé d'Affaires here had not yet made communication foreshadowed but had asked for interview at which he will presumably do so.

Prime Minister asked me to convey to His Majesty's Government and especially to Your Lordship his heartfelt thanks and appreciation of your friendly attitude towards Greece.

¹ No. 105.

No. 118

Sir S. Waterlow (Athens) to Viscount Halifax

(Received April 10, 6.10 p.m.)

No. 122 Telegraphic [R 2507/1877/19]

ATHENS, April 10, 1939, 6.15 p.m.

My telegram No. 119.¹

Following is translation of memorandum handed to Prime Minister by Italian Chargé d'Affaires this morning.

'All rumours that may have circulated or that may circulate as regards an alleged Italian action against Greece are *false*. They can only be spread by *agents provocateurs*. Fascist Italy confirms that it is her intention to respect in the most absolute manner territorial and insular integrity of Greece. It is the will of Fascist Italy to maintain the cordial relations of friendship uniting the two countries and to give them a continuously greater development. She is also disposed to give concrete proofs of this will.

The foregoing in the name of His Excellency the Duce.'

This text has been supplied to me on strict understanding that the fact that it has been communicated should not be divulged to (? the press).²

Repeated to Rome.

¹ No. 117.

² The text is here uncertain.

No. 119

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 11, 9.30 a.m.)
No. 108 Telegraphic [R 2549/1877/19]

ANGORA, April 10, 1939, 8.40 p.m.

Your telegram No. 85.¹

I made communication to Minister for Foreign Affairs on April 10. He did not seem completely reassured as to firmness of our attitude and expressed to me a fear that ultimate result might be a further acceptance of an act of aggression by the Axis Powers. I disagreed with him. Negotiations with Poland and further negotiations over adherence of other Powers to democratic Pact of Assistance, coupled with firm language which you had used to Italy, convinced me that we had now reached an end of patience and that any further act would be dealt with [? with] the strongest opposition. I was slightly disappointed with Minister for Foreign Affairs' reaction. I am to see him again tomorrow and should be very glad if I could be allowed to inform him of substance of Sir E. Phipps' telegram No. 155² (I have already hinted at it in confidence) and of anything further which would convince him.

Please see my immediately following telegram.³

Incidentally Minister for Foreign Affairs mentioned rumours of Italian designs on Crete.

Please send to Paris.⁴

¹ No. 102.

² No. 103.

³ No. 120.

⁴ This telegram was repeated to Paris on April 11.

No. 120

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 11, 9.30 a.m.)
No. 109 Telegraphic [R 2550/1877/19]

ANGORA, April 10, 1939, 8.45 p.m.

My immediately preceding telegram.¹

I have since seen my French colleague who agrees with me that there is an element of hesitation in Minister for Foreign Affairs' present attitude which can only be removed by a categorical statement as to where our two Governments stand in regard to Italian threat to Greece. Such a statement would be on lines of paragraph 2 of your telegram No. 139 to Paris² and paragraph 3 of Paris telegram No. 155,³ viz. that both England and France would declare war on Italy in the event of aggression on Greece.

My French colleague is telegraphing similarly to Paris.

Please send to Paris.⁴

¹ No. 119.

² No. 100.

³ No. 103.

⁴ This telegram was repeated to Paris on April 11.

No. 121

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 11, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 111 Telegraphic [R 2551/1877/19]

ANGORA, April 10, 1939, 11.19 p.m.

My telegram No. 108¹ and . . .²

My French colleague has since seen the Minister for Foreign Affairs and informs me the latter was obviously extremely disappointed by my communication which he had hoped would be much firmer.

My French colleague and I both consider it essential that I should be enabled to give Minister for Foreign Affairs something much more definite and encouraging.

¹ No. 119.

² The text is here uncertain. The reference should probably be to Angora telegram No. 109 (No. 120).

No. 122

Minute by Mr. Ingram

[R 2584/1877/19]

FOREIGN OFFICE, April 10, 1939

The Greek Minister came to see me this morning to convey to me information similar to that contained in Sir Sydney Waterlow's telegram No. 118¹ of today's date to the effect that Signor Mussolini had sent the Italian Chargé d'Affaires to thank the Greek Government for their attitude towards King Zog. The only additional information he gave me was that the Italian Chargé d'Affaires, in making this communication, had requested the Minister for Foreign Affairs that it should be considered as strictly confidential so as to avoid untimely and unnecessary comment in the press.

I informed the Greek Minister of the instructions sent to Sir Sydney Waterlow in our telegram No. 99² to impart to the Greek Government the assurances given by Signor Crolla to the Secretary of State in the second interview with Signor Crolla last night, and I asked M. Simopoulos to let us know, if he could, when and if, and in what terms, the Italian Chargé d'Affaires gave effect to these assurances. M. Simopoulos undertook at once to do his best to keep us informed on this point.

As he left M. Simopoulos begged that we would let him know in advance of any decisions vitally affecting his country so that he might be enabled to inform his Government before those decisions were given out to the press. I assured him that we would certainly do our best to meet his views in this respect.

E. M. B. INGRAM

¹ No. 114.

² No. 105.

No. 123

Viscount Halifax to the Earl of Perth (Rome)

No. 544 [R 2559/1/22]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 10, 1939*

My Lord,

Signor Crolla came to see me again this afternoon to say that the Duce had no objection to the assurances and communications made by himself being used by His Majesty's Government in the debate in Parliament. The Italian Government would much appreciate it if it were possible to inform them in advance of what it was proposed to say, but this was not a condition.

2. I asked Signor Crolla to thank Signor Mussolini on my behalf and said that as far as we could we would comply with this request. Signor Crolla said that this was another gesture of the Duce's which showed how desirous he was of helping. He asked whether I could give him any information as to the discussions of the Cabinet. I said that the Cabinet were gratified that Signor Mussolini had answered so quickly and had noted his assurances about Corfu. They had also approved my general language to himself. On the other hand, I could not conceal from him that the Cabinet were shocked by the events which had taken place in Albania; so, too, was British public opinion, and it would be necessary to give expression to it. None the less, it was still the desire of His Majesty's Government, as they felt sure it was the desire of the Italian Government, to continue to collaborate in the work of peace.

3. Signor Crolla, speaking personally, then drew my attention to a heading in the 'Star' newspaper which ran as follows: "'Malaya" proceeds to unknown destination: ? Corfu.' He asked if there was any truth in this head-line. I replied emphatically that there was none.

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

No. 124

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax
*(Received April 10, 1.45 p.m.)*¹

No. 112 Telegraphic [R 2613/2613/67]

ANGORA, *April 10, 1939, 12.20 p.m.*¹

My telegrams Nos. 108,² 109³ and 111.⁴

At both my last two conversations with the Minister for Foreign Affairs I have noticed there is a certain reticence which I am convinced is only to be explained by the disappointment that we have so far not felt able to give a more definite lead.

2. I have full confidence in the ultimate policy of the Turkish Government should war come but I feel bound to express very seriously my opinion that

¹ This date appears to be a mistake for April 11.

² No. 119.

³ No. 120.

⁴ No. 121.

the present state of mind of the Minister for Foreign Affairs is damaging our cause in two ways; (1) it is impairing the confidence and initiative of the Turkish Government and (2) it is therefore no doubt having a similar damping effect on other Balkan States.

3. I conjecture that disappointment of the Minister for Foreign Affairs is due to two things (a) he hoped that we and France would take a stronger line or even definite action against Italy about Albania, (b) he looked for still plainer speaking as regards possible Italian threats to Greece.

4. In short he is evidently baffled and somewhat discouraged. I feel it is essential to reassure him on all these points beyond further possibility of doubt. The advantage of this would be not only increased decision on the part of the Turkish Government but that their enhanced confidence would prove infectious amongst their neighbours. I beg therefore most seriously to suggest:

5. Firstly that I should be allowed to speak much more plainly about our attitude in the event of Italian threat to Greece and secondly that the moment has arrived when I should be enabled to give under strict secrecy the same [*sic* ? some] indications of our war plans in this theatre and of our intentions for co-operation with Turks (see my secret letter of 10 March to Sir A. Cadogan⁵). I am convinced that if I could give the Turkish Government concrete proof of our intention to co-operate with them in this part of the world it would have immediate effect.

⁵ Not printed. In this letter Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen asked for guidance as to His Majesty's Government's attitude to the role of Turkey in a major war. He summarized the arguments in his letter as follows: 'I do not think it is prudent to count simply on Turkish goodwill. We must make up our minds exactly what we can offer, we must reckon with the tremendous pressure the other side will exert, and we must decide in the light of these considerations whether, if the Turks do not join us of their own accord, we can safely press for alliance or only for neutrality.'

No. 125

Viscount Halifax to Sir S. Waterlow (Athens)

No. 105 Telegraphic [R 2507/1877/19]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 11, 1939, 2.55 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 122.¹

Signor Mussolini has informed me that he has no objection to the assurances he has given being used by His Majesty's Government in the Debate in Parliament on April 13. These assurances include the one which forms the subject of the memorandum of which the text is given in your telegram under reference.

In these circumstances please enquire of Greek Government if they on their side agree to use being made, if necessary, of this memorandum. It is probable, however, that the assurances given to Greece will be referred to in general terms only.

Repeated to Rome.

¹ No. 118.

No. 126

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora)

No. 91 Telegraphic [R 2551/1877/19]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 11, 1939, 3.10 p.m.*

Your telegrams Nos. 108,¹ 109² and 111.³

Please tell Minister for Foreign Affairs that I hope to send you instructions this evening⁴ which I trust will set his mind at rest.

¹ No. 119.

² No. 120.

³ No. 121.

⁴ See No. 128.

No. 127

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)

No. 144 Telegraphic [R 2645/661/67]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 11, 1939, 7.50 p.m.*

My telegram to Angora No. 92.¹

I am most grateful for assurances of M. Daladier as set forth in your telegrams Nos. 155² and 156.³ His Majesty's Government have been considering urgently the steps to be taken to meet the new and dangerous situation which has been produced by Italian action in Albania and have come to the conclusion that action on the lines of my telegram under reference would best meet the case. French Government will observe from paragraph 6 of my telegram No. 92 to Angora the nature of the declaration which the Prime Minister proposes to make regarding Greece, with which, as M. Bonnet will observe, he would like to associate French Government. We felt able to put possibility of French co-operation in this form to Turkish Government, in view of encouraging indications of French attitude given in your telegrams referred to above.

2. Please inform the French Government at once of the approach I am making to the Turkish Government and ask them whether they concur and would be disposed to make a similar communication to Angora.

3. You should explain to the French Government in confidence that even if Turkish co-operation in the sense desired has not been obtained by April 13, His Majesty's Government will nevertheless make the declaration on that day, omitting reference to Turkey, provided French Government have signified their intention of co-operating.

Repeated to Angora, Warsaw, Bucharest, Athens, Sofia and Belgrade.

¹ No. 128.

² No. 103.

³ No. 106.

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora)

No. 92 Telegraphic [R 2647/661/67]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 11, 1939, 8.10 p.m.*

1. Please seek urgent interview with Minister for Foreign Affairs and speak to him on following lines:

2. His Majesty's Government have been, as His Excellency will be aware, much concerned with reports that the Italian Government have been contemplating an attack on Corfu. His Majesty's Government accordingly informed the Italian Government that any such action would be a matter of the gravest concern to them (as His Majesty's Government had ascertained it would also be to France) and they have since received the most formal assurances from the Italian Government that no such action is, or ever was, in contemplation.

3. His Majesty's Government have taken note of these assurances and propose to refer to them in Parliament on April 13.

4. Nevertheless His Majesty's Government think it is necessary to give a more definite assurance against Italian aggression to the Greek Government.

5. As His Majesty's Government understand the present treaty relations between Turkey and Greece, the former is under no obligation to come to the aid of the latter except in the event of aggression by a Balkan Power. If His Majesty's Government and the French Government were to give to the Greek Government a specific assurance, as suggested in paragraph 4, His Majesty's Government would be glad to know whether the Turkish Government would extend their existing obligations to Greece so that Greece might be assured of full Turkish assistance in the event of any Italian threat to Greek independence.

6. If the French Government agree, statement on April 13 might include declaration in following form:

'His Majesty's Government attach the greatest importance to the avoidance of disturbance by force or threat of force of the Mediterranean *status quo*. The events of the last few days have given rise to special anxieties as to the situation of Greece, and His Majesty's Government have accordingly given to that country a specific assurance that in the event of action being taken which clearly threatened the independence of Greece and which the Greek Government accordingly considered it vital to resist with their national forces, His Majesty's Government would feel themselves bound at once to lend the Greek Government all support in their power. I am happy to state that the French Government are taking a similar attitude.'

7. We should be glad if Turkish Government could give a reply to enquiry in paragraph 5 above to reach us before Thursday¹ midday, as if the Turkish

¹ April 13.

reply is favourable, His Majesty's Government would wish to announce the fact in their declaration by adding following:

'His Majesty's Government have consulted the Turkish Government who have intimated that they concur and are prepared to adopt the same attitude.'

8. For your own personal information. If the French Government agree, we shall in all probability announce the above undertaking to Greece in Parliament on April 13, even though assurance of Turkish co-operation has not been received, but I am most anxious to secure such an assurance before then if it can possibly be obtained.

Above only deals with immediate question of possible menace to Greece. I shall be addressing you further telegram² on wider question of co-operation between Turkish Government and His Majesty's Government in regard to Roumania and the Mediterranean.

Repeated to Paris, Athens, Warsaw, Sofia, Bucharest and Belgrade.

¹ See No. 138.

No. 129

Sir A. Ryan (Durazzo) to Viscount Halifax

(Received April 13, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 37 Telegraphic [R 2722/1335/90]

DURAZZO, April 11, 1939, 9.0 p.m.

My immediately preceding telegram.¹

The proceedings of the Italians here are wholly inconsistent with any idea that they are concerned for the independence of Albania at the present time or are likely to restore it in any real sense in the future.

I am impressed by the difference between Durazzo and Tirana, e.g. as shown in the Italian attitude regarding Albanian flag. My impression is that Durazzo is being organized as an Italian military base purely and simply and that the game of political pretences will be played in Tirana.

I am avoiding contact with the Provisional Administrative Committee and will not acknowledge receipt of their circular until I receive your instructions. If you wished I could take the middle line of entering into informal relations with the member in charge of foreign affairs with whom I have had the friendliest relations hitherto.

The Greek Minister gave me yesterday the notes of an oral communication made to him by the late Minister for Foreign Affairs late on April 6 regarding Italian pressure on Albania. It confirms in precise form the previous information but is otherwise no longer of importance. No one here knows even now the exact terms of the Italian demands. The Greek Minister believes that one of the threats used by the Italians was that if the terms were revealed to any third party that alone would lead to occupation. This may explain

¹ Not printed. This telegram, of April 11, reported the position in Tirana on April 10, and the formation of a 'Provisional Administrative Committee' with the approval of the Italian Legation.

the extraordinary unwillingness of the King and the Government to repose confidence in foreign Representatives up to April 4 when their position had become desperate.

My United States colleague got the impression from the German Minister on April 7 that the latter was taken aback by the news of the attack on Durazzo. This does not of course exclude the possibility of German complicity in the Italian plans but United States Minister gets the impression that my German colleague who happens to be a gentleman is disgusted with some aspects of the business, e.g. the return of the late Albanian Minister at Rome, Sereggi, in company with the Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs. German Minister however attended the reception of the latter ceremonially.

Repeated to Rome.

No. 130

Viscount Halifax to Sir R. Lindsay (Washington)

No. 347 [R 2820/2613/67]

FOREIGN OFFICE, April 11, 1939

Sir,

I asked the United States Ambassador to call this evening in order that I might keep him generally in touch with the latest developments in the situation. I told Mr. Kennedy that we had been examining the position created by Italian action in Albania and that we were disposed to feel that it called for some specific assurance from ourselves in support of Greece, with which I hoped it would be possible to associate both the French and the Turkish Governments. It was our intention to make some such statement in Parliament on Thursday.

2. We had also been examining further the Roumanian situation and were doing our best to speed up the action that the Polish Government, through M. Beck, had expressed the desire to take in Bucharest. We had it in mind to strengthen the Roumanian position by securing the support, if we could, of the Turkish Government for Roumania. The new situation created by the Italian occupation of Albania had also given increased importance to Bulgaria.

3. Mr. Kennedy said that he thought a firm declaration by us in the sense I had indicated in support of Greece would be greatly valued in the United States, where opinion might be in some danger of being misled by suggestions that our decision, if such it was, not to denounce the Anglo-Italian Agreement might be taken as implying that we still attributed value to the assurances of Signor Mussolini.

4. I mentioned to the Ambassador the feeling entertained by His Majesty's Government to the effect that if the President was indeed proposing to move the United States Fleet back to the Pacific, this would be, as I had previously told him, a gesture of value, and, from our point of view, the sooner it was done the better.

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

No. 131

The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 13)

No. 308 [R 2737/1877/19]

ROME, April 11, 1939

My Lord,

With reference to Athens telegram No. 118¹ of April 10, I have the honour to inform you that the Greek Chargé d'Affaires called on a member of my staff on April 10 and stated that he saw Signor Anfuso, Count Ciano's Chef de Cabinet, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on April 8, and on instructions informed him that King Zog and a large retinue had arrived in Greece. The Greek Government wished to assure the Italian Government that they had had no previous knowledge of King Zog's intentions and that they were taking every precaution to ensure that he would engage in no political activities while in Greek territory.

2. Signor Anfuso asked M. Romanos to come and see him on April 9 and conveyed to him what the latter described as a distinctly flowery message full of assurances of friendship for Greece. He had discussed this message with members of the staff of the Greek Legation and they were in some doubt whether to regard it as being of a reassuring nature or whether it was intended to chloroform them.

I have, &c.,
PERTH

¹ No. 114.

No. 132

The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 13)

No. 312 [R 2662/399/22]

ROME, April 11, 1939

My Lord,

I have the honour to transmit to Your Lordship a record of a conversation which the Military Attaché to this Embassy had with his French colleague today.

2. I had heard that the French estimate of the number of men now under arms in Italy was approximately two million, and I therefore asked Colonel Burrows to get into touch with General Toussaint and discuss the matter with him. You will see that General Toussaint takes a very gloomy view of the European situation, and foresees the probability of a world war within a comparatively short time.

3. I have already transmitted to Your Lordship the views of the Military Attaché on Italian preparations.¹ The remark that Italy is massing troops at strategic points is probably more or less justified. I have not, however, been

¹ See Volume IV of this Series, No. 384.

able to verify the statement of the recent departure of a considerable number of troops for Spain, although the American Military Attaché has received information about the purchase of civilian clothes at Bolzano and Merano. On the other hand, we have the categorical assurance of Count Ciano that no volunteers are leaving for Spain, and I consider that *a fortiori* this would apply to Italian regular troops. Further, is it likely that General Franco would supply two army corps for an attack on France or on Gibraltar? On the credit side Signor Mussolini, as Your Lordship is aware, has recently formally pledged himself to withdraw Italian troops from Spain immediately after the approaching victory parade in Madrid. There is, in addition, the anxiety shown recently by the Duce in his messages to the Prime Minister and yourself to preserve friendly relations with us, and that the Anglo-Italian Agreement should remain in full force. I attach great importance to this manifestation of Signor Mussolini's sentiments.

4. As regards paragraph 7 of the memorandum, I do not know to what assurances about Albania General Toussaint refers as an example of the worthlessness of the Italian pledged word.

5. I have consulted the Commercial Counsellor as regards General Toussaint's information that factories had received orders a short time ago to resume work at full pressure. Mr. Nosworthy observes that his own first-hand information dates from his tour made at the end of last February (see my despatch No. 195² of the 3rd March), when he found munition plants averaging forty hours per week and reserves of raw materials everywhere low. Since then His Majesty's consular officers have reported no new activity, and the few callers from Milan and the north he has had in the last few weeks have had nothing to say on the subject.

6. The situation is, however, certainly obscure, and, unhappily, many people in Rome are talking as if the Italian recent move in Albania was the prelude to an attack of a general character by Italy and Germany on France and on ourselves.

7. It is being said that Italy has now two million men under arms; that these could be increased in five days to five million, that Germany would have at least four million ready at the shortest notice, and that Paris and London could be bombed out of existence very quickly. Many Italians, too, have convinced themselves that France is rotten to the core and would therefore become a comparatively easy prey. A rumour has reached me from two sources, one in Rome and one in Naples, that something is being planned for the 21st of this month.

8. Such Italians are, of course, exalted at the present moment by the Albanian expedition and seem to think that the democracies would hardly offer more resistance than that which was encountered from King Zog's followers. I feel bound in present circumstances to recount talk of this kind which is prevalent in certain circles in Roman society, but I would add that such circles have as a rule no knowledge whatever of the intentions of the Italian Government; as usual, the only factor which will ultimately count is

² Ibid., No. 361.

Signor Mussolini himself and Your Lordship is in a position to judge as well as I can his general attitude towards European peace, and whether he is likely to embark on policies which cannot but lead to a general war.

9. I strongly wish, however, that it had been possible for conversations between France and Italy to have been initiated, as I fear that Signor Mussolini will be unwilling to exert his influence with Herr Hitler as against a policy of adventure until he has concluded some agreement with France which he can at least represent as a measure of fulfilment of Italian 'national aspirations'. It is not encouraging to learn that, presumably as a result of the occupation of Albania, M. François-Poncet has received further instructions not to go near the Palazzo Chigi.

10. Since writing this despatch I have had an interesting conversation with Count Ciano, who was dining at this Embassy, in the course of which he expressed his horror of the idea of a European war which he remarked would bring about the end of civilisation as we know it to-day. Our talk turned to Anglo-German relations and the Minister for Foreign Affairs observed that he sincerely hoped that Germany and Great Britain might ultimately be able to reach some amicable agreement since a clash between the two countries could not but bring about the catastrophe which Italy wished above all things to avoid. His remarks may, of course, have been directed to what Signor Mussolini terms 'chloroforming action,' but they were spontaneous and appeared to be genuine, particularly as I seemed to detect in them an echo of the views which his father-in-law has on various occasions expressed to me.

I have, &c.,
PERTH

ENCLOSURE IN No. 132

Record of a Conversation between the British and French Military Attachés to Rome.

ROME, April 10, 1939

His Excellency,

I visited the French Military Attaché this morning and imparted to him my official notification from the Ministry of War of the calling up of the 1912 class. General Toussaint said that his information had led him to suspect this but that he was glad to know it officially.

The General was very gloomy, and said that after the attack on Albania he could only conclude that it was as impossible to treat with Mussolini as it was with Hitler and that war was more inevitable than ever. In confirmation of this he averred that Italy now had at least 1,500,000 men under arms. I asked for details of his calculations, and he told me that he had evidence that most, if not all, of the 1914 class had been called up, as well as the 1912, 1901 and the normal annual class. Also he had evidence of quantities of reservists of many other classes, especially 1902-8, 1911 and 1913. He admitted that his evidence was not entirely conclusive, but said that he had it from many

different sources, and that in Rome he saw four reservists to every ordinary conscript walking about the streets.

Roughly his estimate is made up as follows:

(1) Permanent cadre	...	...	...	...	...	50,000
(2) An average of 400,000 for each of the classes 1901, 1912 and 1914	...	...	...	...	...	1,200,000
(3) 1918-19 class	...	...	...	...	...	300,000
(4) Reservists of other classes	...	...	...	...	...	100,000
						<hr/> 1,650,000

In the course of further conversation my French colleague aired the following views:

'Italy and Germany are massing troops in every strategic point in order to force their wishes when they choose the right moment. I do not believe their denial of sending troops to Spain. We have too many reports of the purchase of civilian clothes at Bolzano and Merano, and the departure of Alpine troops from Spezia, for these reports to be false. We know that these troops left Italy in civilian clothes, carrying two suits of khaki drill for each officer and man, and I am sure that these troops will turn up in Spain to the strength of about two army corps which, added to two army corps to be supplied by Franco, will appear either on the Pyrenees or near Gibraltar or in Spanish Morocco as a threat to us at the crucial moment.

'Then Albania—the Italian press claims that the Italian troops have been greeted with open arms and that resistance has been slight, and yet the Italians are sending a huge force of perhaps two army corps and including 300 tanks. Think of the cost of all this for a country which is bankrupt! Can this further financial commitment be undertaken merely as a demonstration of force to the friendly Albanians? Evidently it is a potential strategic threat to Yugoslavia and Greece, to render the former powerless and to force the latter to deny the use of its ports to the British fleet in the event of war.'

I pointed out to the General that the Spanish rumours had been categorically denied both to Your Excellency by Count Ciano and to me by the Director of Military Intelligence, and that Your Excellency had satisfactory assurances from Count Ciano as to the future of Albania and the *status quo* in the Mediterranean, and that the Italians had shown a definite desire to avoid an infringement of the Anglo-Italian Agreement.

General Toussaint expressed his opinion very forcibly on the value of such assurances, and pointed to the seizure of Albania, after various promises that nothing would be done, as an example of their worthlessness.

I referred to the lack of equipment and armament in the Italian army, and the General replied that he had reliable information that factories had received orders a short time ago to resume work at full pressure, and though he admitted that the result of this resumption would not be felt for some time,

he suggested that the arms and equipment found in Czecho-Slovakia were being handed over to the Italians. He had, however, no direct evidence of this.

In conclusion, General Toussaint expressed his conviction that we are now faced with the next act in the drama, which only a miracle can prevent from leading up to a World War. The Italians, he says, are completely in the German hands and, whatever their wishes, must dance to the German tune.

M. B. BURROWS
Colonel, Military Attaché

No. 133

Letter from Sir A. Ryan (Durazzo) to Mr. Ingram (Received April 18)
[R 2951/1335/90]

DURAZZO, April 11, 1939

My dear Ingram,

I had hoped to send a despatch as far as Rome, by the hand of the Naval Attaché who leaves tomorrow, but the strain on my staff is too great. I substitute this letter, which it is easier to get typed, in amplification of my telegrams up to those which I have just drafted for despatch this afternoon.

As you are aware, I reached the conclusion about the 20th to 22nd March that counsels of moderation in regard to Albania had prevailed in Rome and that relations between Italy and Albania had entered on an easier phase. This view, which has been so sadly belied by events, was based on a careful review of all the available data and I was not seriously shaken in it even by the rumours reported in my telegram No. 19¹ of the 31st March.

One element in the bases of my optimism was the persistent refusal of the Albanians themselves to own to any Italian pressure or threats, much less ultimatum. One of my telegrams of today² gives what my Greek colleague now believes to have been the reason for this, namely, a threat by the Italians that, if their demands were revealed, that alone would lead to occupation.

Now for that Holy Week, which the Italians so desecrated and the shadow of which still lies over Eastertide. One of the six colleagues I saw on Monday, the 3rd April, was the Greek Minister. The Albanians that day published here a short communiqué in the following terms:

‘Some foreign newspapers and irresponsible persons have lately spread tendentious news regarding Albania and her relations with Italy.

‘It is beyond all doubt that the object of these reports is to present in an erroneous manner the friendly relations which exist between Albania and Italy.’

Per contra the Greek Minister had had sinister reports from Valona, one of which was to the effect that the Italian Consul-General there was foreshadowing an Italian landing on the 5th or 6th April; and the Greek Minister

¹ See Volume IV of this Series, No. 385.

² See No. 129.

extracted with difficulty certain admissions from the Albanian Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Next day I myself saw the Minister for Foreign Affairs and pressed him strongly for information, contrasting several patent facts, which had attracted attention since our last meeting on the 30th March, with the terms of the above communiqué. To me also he partially confessed the truth. He denied that there was any threat or pressure from authoritative Italian sources, but admitted the language used by the Italian Consul-General in Valona and the alarm caused by the constant reports of concentrations in Italian ports and the general talk there of an expedition to Albania. His Government had to take the authoritative Italian statements at their face value—hence the communiqué. They could not fail to be disturbed by the other set of facts, which conflicted with official assurances.

It was later that evening that my French colleague and I received the message from the King through Mehdi Frasheri, which he had already given to the Turkish, Greek and Yugoslav representatives and which revealed the full gravity of the situation. I returned to Durazzo to find Rome telegram No. 263³ recording Perth's conversation with Ciano of the same day, the 4th April.

I much regret that I was not able to telegraph on the morning of the 5th April details of Mehdi Frasheri's statement and comments on that of Ciano. The trouble was that Queen Geraldine's baby was born in the small hours of the morning and a book was opened at the palace from 12 to 12.45 for congratulations. It was imperative in the conditions not to omit the courtesy of signing, so my wife and I went to Tirana. In the evening I drafted what would have been my telegram No. 25 of the 5th April, but it was not ready until midnight and I abandoned any attempt to send it early next morning, as other things were more urgent and I had already been able to send by safe hand to Rome the full record of Frasheri's communication.⁴

I now enclose a copy of the draft telegram,⁴ which is still of some importance, as it gave my reaction to what Ciano told Perth. I could amplify my comments, but it would now be useless. I will add only one, not on anything Ciano said in that conversation, but on a deliberate lie which has since been put about from Italian sources, namely, that Italian lives were in danger in Albania. No Italian went in danger of his life in this country up to the 5th–6th April, when they were practically all evacuated in preparation for the invasion.

On the morning of Holy Thursday, the 6th April, the Italian ships made their first appearance at Durazzo, but they did nothing and later disappeared with the exception of one destroyer, which lay all day at the quay. It served one purpose of shame. The Prefect of Durazzo, deserting his post, went on board and was later spirited off somehow to Bari, where he broadcasted a disloyal speech. He has since come back as an Italian officer.

Once the ships had appeared, I could not leave the Legation, in the absence

³ No. 72.

⁴ Not printed.

of both Gamble and Borman.⁵ My wife, however, went to Tirana in response to an urgent request from the American Minister, who, it proved, wished to inform me and certain other colleagues, with the King's permission, of what had passed at his interview in the morning. This added little to what he had communicated through Frasheri, except that, on the same morning, he had already received the Italian Minister, who presented a document to be signed on the dotted line. The King had refused it, but had referred the matter to his Ministers and a Committee of Parliament. (It is not clear what he meant by this move, i.e., whether he would abide by their decision or would let them decide what they liked and reserve his own liberty of action.) He was very bitter with the Italians for catching him bending under the pre-occupation of his wife's confinement.

The final Albanian answer was first required by noon on the 6th. This was afterwards prolonged to 6 p.m., when the Government, agreeing with the King, delivered a Note rejecting the demands.

So we get to the morning of Good Friday, the 7th April. We were roused soon after 5 a.m. by the news that the Italian fleet had arrived. The firing began at 5.30. I immediately drafted a short telegram to the Foreign Office, but was unable to send it. Perhaps that was just as well, as my second paragraph read: 'Is not the day of triumph of Judas well chosen?' I seem to have anticipated the judgment of a great part of Christendom.

I need add little about the subsequent proceedings to my telegrams and the wireless news. The Queen left Tirana about 4 a.m. on the morning of the 7th. The King is said to have moved first to his Prime Minister's house and then left about 5.30 p.m. Firing started in Tirana at 6.30, but I can get no clear evidence of who was firing at whom, as the Italians do not seem to have been resisted. Anyhow, they entered the town next morning, and were followed by Ciano, one of whose companions was Sereggi, who had returned to Rome on the 4th April to play or continue the role of a traitor. After Ciano had spoken, the exponent, or principal exponent, of the Albanian people's gratitude was Mgr. Vissarion.⁶

During the critical days refugees crowded into most of the Legations. On the morning of the Friday we had probably not far short of 300 in the house. Their behaviour was excellent. Next day a single refugee came, a local gendarmerie officer, who had lost, dead or wounded, all his body of fifty-two men in the fighting, and who apparently had other reasons besides his resistance for fearing the Italians. I was embarrassed, but I am glad to say that he left of his own accord yesterday.

The only British subjects in Durazzo, Mrs. Pennington (with her adopted daughter) and her maid, elected to stay in their house, and came through all right, although one bullet hit the house.

I have emphasised in my telegram the difference between Durazzo and Tirana as illustrated by the attitude of the Italians towards Albanian flags.

⁵ Mr. Gamble was Vice-Consul at Durazzo and Mr. Borman was Archivist. In their absence Sir A. Ryan was single-handed.

⁶ Former head of the Albanian Orthodox Church.

Both places are, of course, full of soldiers, but the point of my distinction is that Durazzo is a possible starting-point for anywhere in Albania and the frontiers, whereas Tirana is on the road to nowhere except Elbasan, which is also accessible by a lower road from Durazzo via Kavaje.

I searched Durazzo in vain for an Albanian flag on Sunday morning. I found an Albanian tailor named . . .⁷ (he deserves immortality) busy making Italian flags of coloured calico. As I write this passage (3.20 p.m.) I hear that the Albanian flag has reappeared side by side with the Italian.

I have referred to the emotion caused abroad by the choice of Good Friday for the attack. We here are not less revolted by the fact that it was arranged, or at least allowed, almost to coincide with the Queen's confinement. She had a hard time, and the doctors estimated that five days were essential for her recuperation. At one moment before the event her women relatives conceived the idea of bestowing her in the American Legation, which would have received her. The King disallowed this, but the Italians may have heard that it had been suggested, for they sent a secretary to the Legation on the 8th to enquire whether she was there as it might affect their military arrangements. They did not wish, they explained, to incommode Her Majesty! Affection for the Queen may possibly have decided the King to flee the country. It had been thought that he would go to Burrel [? Burele] and put up a fight there. Another explanation of the abandonment of this project, if it was entertained, is that, in view of the attitude of Yugoslavia, he could no longer count on getting away over that frontier in case of need. I am sorry for him. I have never held any particular brief for him, and his régime was open to much criticism, but he did at least stand for the independence of his country.

I hope you have been getting our telegrams without too much delay. Those addressed to me from abroad were held up for two or three days with the result that I got a batch of fourteen yesterday morning. They are now streaming in, a good deal delayed.

I have always been nervous as to what would happen here, if there were a real rush of work when the Vice-Consul and Archivist were both away. I never thought I should be caught by so great a crisis. Had I written my projected despatch, I meant to take the unusual course of paying a tribute to my wife. I could not have coped with the work from April 4 to 7 inclusive without her help night and day, and, as I have said, she replaced me in Tirana on the 6th. My official and personal servants have also been admirable throughout.

I am sending a copy of this to Rome.

Yours ever,
ANDREW RYAN

⁷ A name is here omitted.

No. 134

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 12, 11.25 a.m.)

No. 159 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 2646/661/67]

PARIS, April 12, 1939

Your telegram No. 144,¹ and your telegram No. 92 to Angora.²

I handed to the Minister for Foreign Affairs at 9.20 this morning just before the Ministerial Council, for his confidential information and that of M. Daladier, copies of the above, minus the last two paragraphs of telegram to Angora, of which I informed him orally.

M. Bonnet said that French Government quite agreed about the communication to Turkish Government, and had already instructed the French Ambassador at Angora accordingly last night.

M. Bonnet will inform me before lunch of any decisions of Ministerial Council.

His Excellency said that he thought M. Daladier contemplated making some public declaration today about French assistance to Roumania. What did I think about that?

I asked whether French Ambassador had informed His Majesty's Government of this intention but M. Daladier replied that he had not. I said in that case it would seem advisable not to make any public declaration before consultation with His Majesty's Government. The most urgent question seemed to be Greece which was also the easiest State for us to help. Once that question was settled we could consider how to help the more inaccessible Roumania.

Repeated to Angora, Warsaw, Bucharest, Athens, Sofia and Belgrade.

¹ No. 127.

² No. 128.

No. 135

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 12, 1.35 p.m.)

No. 161 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 2648/661/67]

PARIS, April 12, 1939

My telegram No. 159.¹

Minister for Foreign Affairs confirms that the French Government are entirely in agreement with us about the communication to the Turkish Government.

As regards declaration in British Parliament tomorrow, French Government contemplate making a public statement themselves tomorrow (no doubt in Parliament). They will instruct the French Ambassador later this afternoon to consult with you regarding its terms, time of issue, &c.

Repeated to Angora, Warsaw, Bucharest, Athens, Sofia and Belgrade.

¹ No. 134.

No. 136

Viscount Halifax to Sir S. Waterlow (Athens)

No. 110 Telegraphic [R 2647/661/67]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 12, 1939, 3.45 p.m.*

My telegram No. 92 to Angora,¹ paragraph 6.

Please inform Greek Government at once for their confidential information of the text of the Declaration which His Majesty's Government intend to make tomorrow in Parliament and express the hope that it will be welcome to them. We have heard from the French Government that they concur.

You should at the same time inform them that I am in the closest touch with the Turkish Government with the object of examining the possibility of developing yet further means of collaboration in order to meet the Axis menace.

Repeated to Angora, Paris, Rome, Moscow, Warsaw, Bucharest, Belgrade and Sofia.

¹ No. 128.

No. 137

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)

No. 148 Telegraphic [R 2690/661/67]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 12, 1939, 5.30 p.m.*

My telegram No. 147.¹

Please inform the French Government of further approach which I am making to the Turkish Government as outlined in my telegram No. 98 to Angora² which is being repeated to you and ask them whether they concur and would be disposed to make a communication to Angora similar to that contained in paragraphs 4 and 6 of that telegram.

Repeated to Angora, Athens, Rome, Moscow, Belgrade, Bucharest, Sofia and Warsaw.

¹ No. 138 was repeated to Paris as telegram No. 147.

² No. 138.

No. 138

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora)

No. 98 Telegraphic [R 2688/661/67]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 12, 1939, 6.50 p.m.*

In my telegram No. 92¹ I have set forth the lines of the approach to be made to the Turkish Government in order to deal with the immediate menace to Greece arising out of the Italian action in Albania.

2. We must however fear that the present Italian action in Albania may

¹ No. 128.

only be one step in a wider movement for the achievement of the expansionist aims of the Axis Powers, who, it is presumed, are acting in collusion. We cannot foresee where the next point of attack will be; but whenever and wherever it is made (Greece or Roumania or Poland or Western Europe) the ultimate aim will be joint domination of Europe by Germany and Italy. Whichever of these two Powers it is that launches the attack, it is almost certain that the other will be involved. This means that the next act of aggression by either of the Axis Powers whatever may be the point of attack is likely to involve directly or indirectly all the Powers bordering on the Mediterranean.

3. It must be evident that if in such a war, however it arises, the Western Powers did not emerge completely victorious, the result must be complete domination of the remaining States of Europe by Germany and Italy. If this result is to be averted, it is essential in the interests of all that the strongest possible barrier by the greatest number of States should be jointly opposed to aggressive action on their part.

4. With this object in view, His Majesty's Government are prepared in principle to come to the help of Turkey in the event of any threat by Italy, direct or indirect, to the independence of Turkey in the Mediterranean area which is actively resisted by the Turkish Government, provided that the Turkish Government are prepared for their part to come to the help of His Majesty's Government in the event of His Majesty's Government being involved in a war with Italy. The precise circumstances in which the proposed reciprocal obligation would operate would of course have to be worked out in consultation.

5. You will be aware from my telegram Intel No. 3² of the nature of the approach which His Majesty's Government and the French Government have recently made to the Polish and Roumanian Governments with a view to meeting the German menace. Among the suggestions made to the Polish Government was a proposal for common action by Poland with Great Britain and France in defence of Roumania in the event of any threat by Germany, direct or indirect, to the independence of Roumania which was actively resisted by the Roumanian Government. You will also have seen from my telegrams Nos. 70³ and 71⁴ the conclusions which were reached on this matter during the recent conversations with the Polish Foreign Minister. The Polish Government are now, we believe, in communication with the Roumanian Government on this subject and we await their reply. We have kept the Turkish Ambassador informed in general terms of the above; but in case the situation should not be clearly understood by the Turkish Government you are authorised to explain the situation to them in strict confidence in the light of the telegrams referred to above.

This situation may develop in one of two ways:

² Not printed. This circular telegram summarized the proposals to the Polish and Roumanian Governments printed in Volume IV of this Series, No. 538.

³ No. 24.

⁴ Not printed. See No. 24, note 2.

- (a) that Poland will not be prepared in conjunction with the United Kingdom and France to guarantee Roumania against German aggression,
(b) that Poland will be prepared to give such a guarantee.

6. His Majesty's Government consider it of the first importance that the Turkish Government should collaborate in any project of common defence, and in determining what attitude they will adopt towards either of the foregoing alternatives they will be influenced by any indication which the Turkish Government can give them as to what their (the Turkish) attitude would be towards either of the two developments enumerated above.

7. It further appears to His Majesty's Government that in the present situation it is most desirable to achieve the greatest possible degree of co-operation between the Balkan States and from this point of view the position and attitude of Bulgaria has a special importance. I shall be glad to learn from the Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs his estimate of the probable attitude of Bulgaria in the situation which we are envisaging and whether in his view there are any steps which could now be taken to secure her co-operation or, if this is impossible, at least to neutralise her opposition.

8. You should lose no time in laying the foregoing considerations before the Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs. He will doubtless wish to consider them in connexion with the enquiry which you will have made as a result of the instructions in my telegram No. 92. I have no desire to rush His Excellency where decisions of such moment are involved. You may therefore indicate to him that while of course His Majesty's Government would be grateful to have an early expression of his views on the proposals contained in the present telegram, I should not wish the consideration of these matters to delay the Turkish Government's reply to the more urgent question dealt with in my telegram No. 92.

Repeated to Paris, Warsaw, Bucharest, Athens, Sofia, Belgrade, Rome and Moscow.

No. 139

Viscount Halifax to the Earl of Perth (Rome)

No. 192 Telegraphic [R 2559/1/22]

FOREIGN OFFICE, April 12, 1939, 7.0 p.m.

Please inform Minister for Foreign Affairs at once that in accordance with authority conveyed to me by Italian Chargé d'Affaires, the Prime Minister in his statement in the House tomorrow will hope to make use of the recent assurances given to His Majesty's Government either direct to you, or through Signor Crolla to myself, regarding the independence and integrity of Albania, respect for the Anglo-Italian Agreement i.e. maintenance of the *status quo* in the Mediterranean, withdrawal from Spain and the Italian intention not to attack Corfu and to respect the territorial and insular integrity of Greece.

2. This statement is bound to take account of extent to which British and

world opinion has been affected by Italian action, and will have to include some critical references to Italian policy but these will be couched in a form as little provocative as possible.

3. Finally you should inform the Minister that the Prime Minister will make a declaration in general terms to the effect that with the object of assisting restoration of confidence His Majesty's Government have given a specific assurance to Greece that in the event of action being taken which threatens the independence of that country and which the Greek Government accordingly considered it vital to resist, His Majesty's Government would feel bound to come to the assistance of the Greek Government.

No. 140

Sir S. Waterlow (Athens) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 12, 10.0 p.m.)
No. 129 Telegraphic [R 2689/661/67]

ATHENS, April 12, 1939, 8.40 p.m.

Your telegram No. 110.¹

Prime Minister has taken note with greatest satisfaction of communication made to Greek Government and expressed to His Majesty's Government his profound gratitude for their generous and spontaneous attitude towards Greece. Only request which His Excellency has to make is that care may be taken not to give the impression that the declaration has been made as a result of previous agreement with Greece in order that the impression may not be given that the Greek Government attach no value to their relations with the Italian Government.

Repeated to Rome, Paris and Angora.

¹ No. 136.

No. 141

The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 12, 11.0 p.m.)
No. 322 Telegraphic [R 2685/1877/19]

ROME, April 12, 1939, 9.0 p.m.

Athens telegram No. 122¹ to you. Text of Italian communication to Greek Government is published in this morning's press together with text of communication by Greek Minister here to Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressing the thanks [? of his Government] for Italian assurances and conviction that nothing could arise to disturb the traditional friendship between the two countries.

'Giornale d'Italia' observes that the Italian Government confirms the clarity of Italian policy. Italy having occupied Albania has no intention of

¹ No. 118.

threatening surrounding States. Indeed the development of a wider collaboration is awaited. Only an attitude of opposition to this collaboration on the part of neighbouring States could alter her intention.

Greece has no need therefore of compromising guarantees of distant countries.

Repeated to Athens.

No. 142

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 12, 10.35 p.m.)

No. 162 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 2691/661/67]

PARIS, April 12, 1939

Your telegram No. 148.¹

Minister for Foreign Affairs agrees and will immediately instruct French Ambassador at Angora to concert with His Majesty's Ambassador in making desired communication to the Turkish Government.

Repeated to Angora, Warsaw, Bucharest, Athens, Sofia, Belgrade, Rome and Moscow.

¹ No. 137.

No. 143

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)
No. 149 Telegraphic [R 2646/661/67]

FOREIGN OFFICE, April 12, 1939, 11.0 p.m.

Your telegram No. 159.¹

Do French Government agree that Prime Minister should refer to their concurrence in terms of last sentence of Declaration as telegraphed in paragraph 6 of my telegram No. 92² to Angora?³

¹ No. 134.

² No. 128.

³ Sir E. Phipps replied at 10.57 a.m. on April 13 that the French Government agreed.

No. 144

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)
No. 150 Telegraphic [R 2693/661/67]

FOREIGN OFFICE, April 12, 1939, 11.20 p.m.

French Ambassador brought me text of Declaration¹ which M. Daladier proposes to issue tomorrow which extends immediate guarantee to Roumania as well as Greece.

¹ There is no record in the Foreign Office archives of the receipt of any draft text prior to that annexed to No. 66. See also No. 48.

Our Declaration has been framed to meet the situation which has led to the reassembly of Parliament, i.e. the Italian threat to Greece arising out of her action in Albania and while His Majesty's Government attach no less importance than do the French Government to securing the position of Roumania and wish to act in closest co-operation with them to this end they had not contemplated possibility at this stage of revealing further and more comprehensive arrangements which they hope to make for opposing German as well as Italian expansionist aims.

You are aware of proposals recently made to Warsaw and Bucharest under which our guarantee to Roumania would be dependent on a Polish guarantee and you will have seen our further approach to Turkish Government with a view to securing their support for Roumania.

If we now give Roumania an unconditional guarantee it seems to me that we throw away the lever which we have for bringing Poland and Turkey into a wider arrangement. We feel that Turkey is the key to Balkan solidarity, achievement of which seems to us of the highest importance.

I understand difficulty which the French Government feel in giving guarantee to Greece without saying anything about Roumania, but if we treat present occasion as one calling for immediate measures to resist Italian expansion in Mediterranean countries and make it clear that this is without prejudice to arrangements which, as is widely known, we are negotiating with Poland and Roumania I cannot think that any harm will be done.

On the other hand if we and the French Government come out with different Declarations the effect will be deplorable.

I cannot believe that to leave Roumania out of tomorrow's Declaration will be a signal to Germany immediately to attack Roumania. It is well known that we are trying to negotiate guarantees for that country and I should hope that satisfactory agreement might be reached within a few days.

I have spoken to Prime Minister who entirely shares the above view and who feels very strongly that the introduction of the Roumanian question at this stage when, while awaiting the reactions of other Governments, His Majesty's Government cannot take up a definite position at the moment will raise unnecessary difficulties. The danger to be apprehended from the suspicion that we and the French are not in line seems to me so much greater than permitting present position in regard to Roumania to continue for a few days yet.

Please put the foregoing considerations immediately to the French Government. I shall be very grateful for a reply by 11 a.m. tomorrow when Cabinet meets.

No. 145

Viscount Halifax to Sir S. Waterlow (Athens)

No. 144 [R 2728/1877/19]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 12, 1939*

Sir,

The Greek Minister came to see me at 5.15 this afternoon. To my enquiry as to whether he felt happier, M. Simopoulos replied that the results of our intervention had been more efficacious than the Greek Government could ever have expected.

2. The Minister was charged to deliver a message from the Greek Prime Minister (copy attached), couched in the warmest terms, of gratitude for the action which His Majesty's Government had been able to take at a moment of crisis. I told him that His Majesty's Government were very gratified to receive this message, which, if I understood aright, referred to the results of our action in producing the recent Italian assurances to Greece. M. Simopoulos made it clear that this was the case.

3. I then read to the Minister the terms of the Declaration which the Prime Minister was going to make in the House of Commons tomorrow afternoon (copy attached), which I hoped would be welcomed by his Government. The Greek Minister said he was more than satisfied, but I rather doubt whether he immediately apprehended the full purport and importance of the declaration.

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

ENCLOSURE 1 IN No. 145

Message from the Greek Prime Minister

April 11, 1939

The Greek Minister in London was requested by the Greek Prime Minister to express to Lord Halifax the deep gratitude felt by General Metaxas for the communication made to him by His Britannic Majesty's Minister at Athens, which constitutes a new and tangible proof of the unchanging friendship of Great Britain towards Greece.

The lively interest manifested for Greece during these critical days, and the immediate and effective mediation of the British Government to avert a dangerous situation, moved the Prime Minister deeply, and constitute the most valuable encouragement, increasing even more, if that were possible, the sentiments of devoted friendship and gratitude which Greece shall never cease to cherish towards the noble British nation.

Declaration to be made by the Prime Minister in the House of Commons on April 13, 1939¹

His Majesty's Government attach the greatest importance to the avoidance of disturbance by force or threat of force of the Mediterranean *status quo*. The events of the last few days have given rise to special anxieties as to the situation of Greece, and His Majesty's Government have accordingly given to that country a specific assurance that, in the event of action being taken which clearly threatened the independence of Greece and which the Greek Government accordingly considered it vital to resist with their national forces, His Majesty's Government would feel themselves bound at once to lend the Greek Government all support in their power. I am happy to state that the French Government are taking a similar attitude.

¹ In view of the decision to announce the guarantee to Roumania on April 13 (see Chapter I) the Declaration was made in a slightly different form. See note at the end of this Chapter (p. 197).

No. 146

Sir S. Waterlow (Athens) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 13, 12.45 a.m.)
No. 130 Telegraphic [R 2747/661/67]

ATHENS, April 13, 1939, 1.5 a.m.

My immediately preceding telegram.¹

Greek Government are somewhat perturbed by article in 'Giornale d'Italia' today² saying Greece has no need of compromising guarantees from distant countries when she is not threatened by any neighbours and ending 'altogether clear that . . .³ Italian declarations Greece does not need a new insurance policy which would be worse than useless and only calculated to disturb an otherwise clear atmosphere'. Prime Minister asks me to emphasise that nature of Italian reaction shows importance of point made in my telegram under reference.

Repeated to Rome, Paris and Angora.

¹ No. 140.

² This telegram was drafted on April 12.

³ The text is here uncertain.

No. 147

Sir S. Waterlow (Athens) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 13, 12.45 a.m.)
No. 131 Telegraphic [R 2692/661/67]

ATHENS, April 13, 1939, 1.5 a.m.

German Minister asked Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs this morning¹ whether there was any question of a British guarantee to Greece.

¹ This telegram was drafted on April 12.

He was told that Greek Government had no knowledge of any such proposal which was true at the time. He said it would be disagreeable to German Government.

Repeated to Berlin, Rome and Paris.

No. 148

The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax

(Received April 13, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 324 Telegraphic [R 2686/1/22]

ROME, April 13, 1939, 1.25 a.m.

Your telegram No. 192.¹

As the Minister for Foreign Affairs went to Tirana today² and I do not know when he returns I have thought it best to embody the terms of your telegram under reference in an *aide-mémoire* which I am sending to him in an urgent personal letter stating that I await [*sic* ? am at] his disposal any time tomorrow morning should he desire to talk to me on the subject.

I shall arrange that, if he has not returned, the letter will be opened by whoever may be acting on his behalf.

¹ No. 139.

² This telegram was drafted on April 12.

No. 149

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax

(Received April 13, 8.0 a.m.)

No. 119 Telegraphic [R 2695/661/67]

ANGORA, April 13, 1939, 3.19 a.m.

Your telegram No. 92.¹

Reply of Turkish Government is to the effect that they do not feel able at present to commit themselves to public statement in sense desired for two reasons:

1. Constitutional question arises and consent of Chamber would be necessary.
2. They do not feel able to agree to a statement which places them irretrievably on one side in present international conflict without some more definite guarantee of their own security.

I will telegraph full details as soon as possible. Meanwhile I can add Minister for Foreign Affairs has given me most (? discreet)² and definite assurances as to the real sympathies and intentions of his Government.

Repeated to Paris, Athens, Warsaw, Sofia, Bucharest and Belgrade.

¹ No. 128.

² The text is here uncertain.

No. 150

The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 13, 10.30 a.m.)

No. 325 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 2715/1/22]

ROME, April 13, 1939

Your telegram No. 192.¹

As Count Ciano was in Tirana and no one was available at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs last night, I arranged that the First Secretary should hand the letter from me containing an *aide-mémoire* based on your telegram under reference to His Excellency's Chef de Cabinet at 9.30 a.m. this morning. Signor Anfuso read the document carefully and asked when the instruction had reached me. He was told when the Embassy telephoned to him last night at about 11 p.m. He said that he would see that the *aide-mémoire* reached the Duce immediately and that Count Ciano should have it on his return.

¹ No. 139.

No. 151

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 13, 11.45 a.m.)

No. 123 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 2696/661/67]

ANGORA, April 13, 1939

Your telegram No. 92¹ and my telegrams Nos. 119² and 120.³

The Turkish Government agree to the inclusion of the following passage in the statement in Parliament.

'The Turkish Government, whose close relations with the Greek Government are known, were informed of this declaration on April 12.'

¹ No. 128.

² No. 149.

³ No. 153.

No. 152

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 13, 12.30 p.m.)

No. 122 Telegraphic [R 2746/661/67]

ANGORA, April 13, 1939, 12.0 noon

Your telegram No. 98.¹

I have had a preliminary conversation with Minister for Foreign Affairs. With regard to paragraph 4 of your telegram he asked why guarantee offered by His Majesty's Government only covered threat by Italy and did not mention Germany? I replied [? that] the whole sense of your telegram showed that we connected Germany and Italy together and that a threat from one was regarded as a threat from both.

¹ No. 138.

But I should be grateful for instructions as to whether threat to Turkey from Germany is definitely covered.

No. 153

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 13, 3.45 p.m.)
No. 120 Telegraphic [R 2764/661/67]

ANGORA, April 13, 1939, 1.35 p.m.

My telegram No. 119.¹

Following is translation of reply handed to me last night by Minister for Foreign Affairs in form of an oral communication.

'We regard as of greatest importance the integrity of Greek territory. Value which we attach to this inviolability led us to conclude with Greece an Agreement of mutual guarantee respecting certain of our frontiers.² This shows the vital interest which Turkey attaches to this question.

'Nevertheless in reply to the oral communication made by Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen, Minister for Foreign Affairs feels bound to state that fact of assisting Greece automatically in the event of her being attacked by Italy constitutes a new undertaking which Turkish Government cannot assume in a valid form without a formal decision of (? Provisional)³ National Assembly.

'Nevertheless it goes without saying that the Turkish Government considers the security problem with the same interest as does His Majesty's Government and is ready to treat it in the most friendly spirit.'

Point 2 in my telegram No. 119 was pressed verbally by Minister for Foreign Affairs and is clearly the one to which Turkish Government attach importance.

I have now received your telegram No. 98⁴ and am seeing Minister for Foreign Affairs again as soon as possible.

¹ No. 149.

² The Turco-Greek Treaty of 1938 is printed in *British and Foreign State Papers*, vol. 142, p. 612.

³ The French text of the Turkish note, transmitted subsequently by Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen, uses the term 'Grande Assemblée Nationale'.

⁴ No. 138.

No. 154

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)
No. 155 Telegraphic [R 2528/661/67]

FOREIGN OFFICE, April 13, 1939, 4.30 p.m.

Your telegrams Nos. 156¹ and 158.²

I understand that the Naval Attaché is returning to Paris with explanation in general terms of the real facts of the situation. He will be communicating

¹ No. 106.

² No. 115.

this to the French Naval Staff today, thus I trust serving to allay excessive French preoccupations on this point.

No. 155

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora)
No. 106 Telegraphic [R 2746/661/67]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 13, 1939, 6.0 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 122.¹

1. You correctly interpreted our reasoning.
2. The situation has again been altered by decision of His Majesty's Government to guarantee Roumania (see my telegram No. 101²). You may therefore inform the Minister for Foreign Affairs that a direct guarantee to Turkey against Germany would naturally follow if, as we hope, Turkey agrees for her part to guarantee Roumania, since we realise that Turkey by doing so might risk coming into direct conflict with Germany.
3. If we were to guarantee Turkey against Germany, we should expect Turkey to reciprocate by guaranteeing the United Kingdom against Germany. Your own reply to Minister for Foreign Affairs exactly represents thought of His Majesty's Government.

¹ No. 152.

² No. 60.

No. 156

*Captain Bowyer-Smyth to the Earl of Perth*¹
[R 2953/1335/90]

ROME, *April 13, 1939*

My Lord,

I have the honour to report that on Friday the 7th April I left Rome for Durazzo in accordance with your instructions.

I went by train to Bari and there found Mr. Borman, the archivist at His Majesty's Legation at Durazzo, and Mr. Ryan, Sir Andrew Ryan's son. I was met by an Italian naval officer, who escorted us to the harbour to the Italian destroyer 'Oriani', sent there to take us to Durazzo. We were made very comfortable on board and shown every hospitality, fostered perhaps by the coincidence that the captain—Capitano di Fregata L. Bigi—had been Naval Attaché at Tehran shortly after I had served in the Persian Gulf, so we had some common interests.

We anchored off Durazzo shortly after 8 in the morning of Saturday the 8th April. The Italian 'First Squadron' of four 10,000-ton cruisers were anchored there, and about eight destroyers. I went with my host to call on

¹ This report from the Naval Attaché to H.M. Embassy at Rome was transmitted by Lord Perth on April 14 to the Foreign Office, where it was received on April 18.

Admiral Sportiello commanding the naval forces, with his flag in the 'Fiume'. He was very cordial and I did not ask any questions.

We landed in the harbour in the 'Oriani's' motor boat and walked up to the Legation. I did not then know that a landing had taken place, but from the shell holes in the walls of houses and empty cartridge cases lying about it was evident that there had been some fighting.

At the Legation we found Sir Andrew and Lady Ryan, who told us that the Italians had occupied the town by force the day before. They were not expecting us as they had had no telephonic or telegraphic communication since the previous morning when the landing started.

From what the Minister told me, accounts of an English eye-witness, and those of several Albanians who were in the town, I have made up the following story of the landing. It is probably roughly correct without being accurate in detail:

The Italians probably expected no resistance. The Albanians, on the other hand, were determined to account for all the invaders they could before their very meagre stock of ammunition ran out. The men of Durazzo went to a central depot and got rifles and ammunition—50 rounds a man. Some trained troops probably came from Tirana also. The King was certainly *not* there as some papers said. Had he been he might have left a mark in history that he will certainly never leave now.

By 0530 a transport and a destroyer were already in the inner harbour close to the shore. The supporting cruisers were anchored in the offing. The defenders were lining the foreshore under cover. When the invaders got ashore the defenders opened fire, killing a good many. An eye-witness said 'they fell in two heaps', which suggests that the defenders had at least two machine guns—and the 'empties' I saw confirm this.

The invaders then retired, and ships opened fire to disperse the unexpected resistance. There are some fifteen direct hits on walls and quays, mostly about 4.7-inch calibre. H.E. shell was not used, the damage is too small, it was probably shrapnel—or practice. The defenders meanwhile, moved forward and lined a parapet closer to the water's edge. The attackers landed again in larger numbers, and with a flanking party to take the defenders in the flank. The defenders were overcome by sheer weight of numbers and, after inflicting a good many casualties, retreated into the town.

There followed an hour or two of street fighting. Many windows were broken and walls are peppered with bullets. The transport by this time was alongside, and small tanks disembarked from her helped to clear the town. By 0900 all effective resistance in Durazzo was over, and the Albanian survivors were either having coffee in civilian clothes in the cafés or making their way along the road out of the town to Tirana in the hope of finding somewhere a few more rounds of ammunition to shoot another Italian or two with before the inevitable end.

I thought when I saw them that the guns of the fixed defences had not been

used, as they were covered and looked to be in their stowage positions. Residents, however, think they heard them, and one eye-witness thinks she saw splashes near the ships. I still think they were not used as the Italians could easily have seen to that beforehand, and would hardly have lain off the harbour in broad daylight as they did had they not been sure of these guns.

Once committed to the occupation the use of ships' guns to silence opposition was a legitimate and necessary step and they do not seem to have been used more than was absolutely necessary for that purpose. To speak of it as the bombardment of a defenceless town is not fair to the Italians—especially as the town had defences, even if they were not used.

As regards the number of casualties, reports differ very much. People in Durazzo have said that the Italians lost 400 dead. Half that number is probably not far wrong, and the Albanians may have lost more. All the dead and wounded had been removed when I arrived the next day, probably to the ships until the hospital ship arrived shortly afterwards.

The friendly bearing of the Italians towards the inhabitants was so conspicuous that it was evidently a matter of policy instilled into all concerned, aided by the fact that the Italian soldiers, who are of a naturally friendly nature, did not seem interested in the cause they were pursuing at all. Be that as it may, I heard of many instances of fraternal behaviour on their part, and no single instance of harsh action.

Soon after I arrived, Sir Andrew Ryan talked to me of the political situation in Albania. So far as I can recollect them, the following points emerge from this talk:

King Zog was a personality and a natural leader, but he was a slippery customer, and the Italians were getting a bit tired of his slipperiness. He had also failed utterly during his years of kingship to endear himself to his people by any sign of the methods open to a constitutional sovereign. But no one would accuse him of being a coward, and in quitting the country rather than face the music of his own making he was not running quite true to form.

Although the country was being badly ruled, there was no disturbance to speak of except that arranged by the invaders beforehand in accordance with the now recognised technique of penetration.

To suggest that there was any danger to Italian lives or property before the occupation is the sheerest nonsense.

After some period of doubt, Sir Andrew was eventually taken completely by surprise by the invasion. His German colleague, who, as he says, 'happens to be a gentleman', was equally surprised. He thought that that did not necessarily mean that official circles in Germany were kept in the dark, but it might.

It is interesting to speculate the effect the King might have had on future events by staying to fight, particularly if he had been wounded, or even killed. As a fighting nation, this would have welded the Albanians together and they would have forgotten and forgiven his misdeeds. As it is, the

Albanians are heartbroken—the only word. Their country is taken, their King has deserted them, and they might as well accept what comes and make the best of it, but they are very apprehensive for the future.

The resistance ordered was probably only intended as a token resistance, which is, indeed, all it could be against the immense force used by the invaders. The practical effect of the King's flight will probably be to weaken the spirit of the hill men, who might have resisted sporadically for some time, and so really to save life.

By the time I arrived the town was already being organised on a military basis. This organisation was complete before I left, but a curfew was still in force from 9 p.m. to 5 a.m. I was struck on arrival by the amount of stores and war material ashore and in transit, and by the large number of aeroplanes passing east towards Tirana. Some 20,000 to 30,000 tons of shipping was continually alongside, empty ships being replaced as soon as they were ready by full ones. (Details have been telegraphed.)² The ships' derricks were idle most of the day, but as I heard them sometimes at night, and as the cargoes were certainly discharged, I infer that most of the off-loading took place at night or in the early morning. I estimate that in the four days I was there some 60,000 tons of shipping unloaded there. Most of the movement of troops and material inland must have taken place at night, too, as little was to be seen in the daytime.

On my way back to Tirana on Tuesday, the 11th, I passed several large units of troops and transport making their way by stages inland. I have given particulars of these to the Military Attaché. We passed also about a dozen large bomb-holes by the road where retreating Albanians had evidently been bombed from the air. Durazzo itself was not bombed at all. On the aerodrome at Tirana there were thirty-five bombers and twenty-four fighters, a very small fraction of what they must have in the country.

I happened to be on the aerodrome waiting for the aeroplane to bring me back, when Count Ciano arrived for the opening of the Assembly. He was greeted by the usual Fascist honours, raised hands, plenty of photographers, and so forth. There was also a crowd of Albanians to play their part. They clapped first, then all shouted: 'Viva il Duce!' I watched these carefully with a glass. There was nothing spontaneous about it, and the Legation chauffeur, an Albanian, who was in the crowd, told me that Italians in uniform had been moving amongst them making them do these things. To say that the Italians are welcomed by the 'people' is just as nonsensical as it is to say that Italian lives were endangered beforehand. A bright-looking lad who moved the 'gangway' up to the aeroplane for me was evidently an opportunist. He gave me a very smart Fascist salute with a good smile. When I said I was not an Italian, he relaxed altogether and left no doubt about his real feelings.

I will finish this story by repeating for what it is worth a piece of 'bazaar gossip' told me by Albanian Legation servants. From some soldiers and from an Italian family returned to Albania they hear that Italian objectives are, first, Yugoslavia, then Greece, then perhaps further east.

² Not printed.

I am afraid that Sir Andrew and Lady Ryan had an extremely trying time during the occupation. They had been keeping very long hours beforehand trying to keep abreast of the cyphers without any staff, and during the occupation itself they were cut off from all outside communication.

I have, &c.,

P. W. BOWYER-SMYTH
Captain, Naval Attaché

No. 157

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 14, 12.25 p.m.)
No. 128 Telegraphic [R 2825/661/67]

ANGORA, April 14, 1939, 12.25 p.m.

Your telegram 101¹ and your telegram 106.²

1. I have communicated with Minister for Foreign Affairs accordingly.
2. He fully understands position. Turkish Government will examine all our proposals and His Excellency will give me an answer in due course.
3. I said that you naturally realised gravity of decision which you were asking Turkey to take, and do not wish to rush Turkish Government but that he would realise urgency of matter in present circumstances and would understand my anxiety to hear decision of the Turkish Government.
4. His Excellency replied that I could take it that in principle Turkish Government were in agreement.

I asked if I could inform you of this and he said I could.

¹ No. 60.

² No. 155.

No. 158

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 15, 9.30 a.m.)
No. 131 Telegraphic [R 2900/661/67]

ANGORA, April 14, 1939, 5.49 p.m.

My telegram 112¹ last paragraph.

At end of conversation with Minister for Foreign Affairs reported in my telegram No. 128,² His Excellency mentioned the subject of material co-operation in war. The mention was absolutely casual and incidental to something else he was saying. I said obviously His Majesty's Government had their war plans for all . . .³s including this part of the world but would naturally be reluctant to divulge them until the need arose. If however, His Excellency wished for information as to the point he could ask me and I would pass his question on to you. I should, however, interpret the fact that he had put this question as an indication that Turkey had decided to come in on our side. His Excellency . . .³ understood.

¹ No. 124.

² No. 157.

³ The text is here uncertain.

Sir A. Ryan (Durazzo) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 20)

No. 45 [R 3059/1335/90]

DURAZZO, April 14, 1939

My Lord,

The not very satisfactory wireless reports of yesterday's proceedings in Parliament¹ inspire me with some doubt as to whether I have sufficiently informed Your Lordship of my views on the merits of the rival contentions of the Italian Government and the late Albanian Government in connexion with the negotiations which collapsed finally on the evening of the 6th April. You will readily forgive me if, under the great pressure here since the 4th April, I have not done justice to this particular subject, and if, even now, I can write only hurriedly.

2. In my despatch No. 24² of the 4th March I attempted to trace the growth of Italian displeasure with King Zog. Some of the grounds of it were undoubtedly good, but I cannot believe that they were sufficient to justify the recent action of the Italian Government, nor can I credit the explanations given by Count Ciano in his conversation with Lord Perth on the 4th April.³ The enclosure in my semi-official letter to Mr. Ingram⁴ of the 11th April gives my reasons for doubting the Count's statements, and in the letter itself I confidently contradicted the suggestion made in other Italian quarters that the lives of Italians in Albania were in danger up to the 5th April, when the Italian authorities began, without any interference, to evacuate their nationals. The demonstrations in Tirana on the nights of the 1st and 2nd April were politically anti-Italian, but I have not heard of any Italian being molested even in those moments of excitement.

3. I feel equally confident that existing Italian interests were in no more danger than the lives of Italian subjects. It would have been no difficult matter to injure property in such places as the Kuçova oil-fields or the E.I.A.A.⁵ property near Durazzo, but no injury was in fact done to them. If the Italian Government had anything against King Zog, it was that he was not accommodating enough to please them in regard to the creation of new interests, and even in this respect he was ready to give them a large measure of satisfaction in the final stages of their quarrel.

4. I am now convinced that the Italian Government decided in January, if not earlier, to destroy King Zog. I was prepared to believe, after my conversation with my Italian colleague on the 20th March, that the graver charges against Signor Giro might have been invented by his enemies here. I now again incline to the view that they were to a large extent true, and that there was a deliberate plot to engineer an internal movement against the King and to create a situation of which Italy might take advantage to come

¹ See Parl. Deb., 5th ser., H. of C., vol. 346, cols. 5-140.

² Not printed.

³ See No. 72.

⁴ No. 133.

⁵ The Ente Industrie Agania Albania, an Italian development corporation.

in and restore order. In his telegram No. 306⁶ of the 9th April Lord Perth has noted the similarity of most of the recently published appeals by Albanians to the Duce. These were produced in the press here on the 11th April, and my interpreter, without any knowledge of Lord Perth's telegram, passed the same comment. I have had a translation made of the appeal signed by Gjon Marko, the Mirdite chief, on the 10th January, and all I can say is that no Albanian mountaineer could ever have drafted it.

5. The first plot failed, and the Italians were faced with the alternatives of going easy or compassing their ends by some means other than that of fomenting internal disorder in Albania. I do not pretend to know how their action developed, but it is now clear that they eventually couched their demands in such a form that King Zog could not have accepted them without sacrificing every shred of real independence, or without incurring the further danger of losing his throne *quand même* after making the sacrifice. He played for time, as we know, and he staved off the final disaster long enough, although only just long enough, to enable his wife to get through her confinement before the last blow was delivered.

6. The difficulty of tracing the exact course of the negotiations is enormously increased by the reticence observed until almost the last moment by King Zog and his advisers, lest, as I now believe, they should incense the Italians by revealing the true situation; and by the fact that even now, so far as I am aware, the Italians have not disclosed their precise demands, in spite of Your Lordship's suggestion to the Italian Chargé d'Affaires in London that they should do so.

7. King Zog is an oriental diplomatist of the old school. I have no doubt that he greatly irritated the Italians at various times by accepting their favours and giving them less than they wanted in return. He also failed greatly, although by no means completely, as a ruler. His régime generally and his choice of entourage in particular bred many discontents, and bred, above all, the resigned apathy, which I have more than once noted as one of the most dangerous symptoms of the state of this country. If I have great sympathy with the late King in his present plight, it is not as his defender or friend that I express my strong conviction that there was nothing in the condition of this country, nothing in the position between Italy and Albania, and, above all, nothing in the situation of Italian nationals here, which could possibly justify the brutal assault of Good Friday, the 7th April.

8. I regret that I should have to deal thus summarily with a subject which bristles with difficulty. I trust, however, that this despatch, read in conjunction with my letter to Mr. Ingram of the 11th April, will contribute to an understanding of events which, for the time being, have placed Albania under the rule of Italian armed forces, assisted by a nominal Government of turn-coats. It is too soon to judge of the real reactions of the Albanian people. The Italian troops have behaved with marked consideration on the whole, notwithstanding the unexpected resistance which they encountered when they landed in Durazzo and which is believed to have caused more casualties on

⁶ Not printed.

the invading side than they have admitted. So far as I can ascertain, there was little serious resistance elsewhere, but it cannot be inferred from this that Albanians generally welcome the arrival of the Italians, however much they may welcome the disappearance of King Zog. I think that the townsmen and lowlanders will resign themselves to the new situation, but that guerrilla warfare may develop in the mountains in due course. One thing which might attract a certain amount of genuine support for the Italians, outside the small circle of time-serving or paid adherents, would be an attempt to increase Albanian territory at the expense of Yugoslavia and Greece, the possibility of which I have suggested in my telegram No. 43⁷ of the 13th April.

9. I am sending a copy of this despatch to His Majesty's Ambassador at Rome.

I have, &c.,
ANDREW RYAN

⁷ Not printed.

Note to Chapters I and II

The Declaration made by the Prime Minister announcing the guarantees to Greece and Roumania was in the following terms: 'His Majesty's Government attach the greatest importance to the avoidance of disturbance by force or threats of force of the *status quo* in the Mediterranean and the Balkan Peninsula. Consequently they have come to the conclusion that, in the event of any action being taken which clearly threatened the independence of Greece or Roumania, and which the Greek or Roumanian Government respectively considered it vital to resist with their national forces, His Majesty's Government would feel themselves bound at once to lend the Greek or Roumanian Government, as the case might be, all the support in their power. We are communicating this declaration to the Governments directly concerned, and to others, especially Turkey, whose close relations with the Greek Government are known. I understand that the French Government are making a similar declaration this afternoon.' See Parl. Deb., 5th ser., H. of C., vol. 346, col. 13.

CHAPTER III

The European situation: Italy, Turkey and the Balkans: correspondence with the French and Soviet Governments with regard to proposals for checking further German aggression. (April 14–21, 1939.)

No. 160

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 14, 2.20 p.m.)
No. 107 Telegraphic [C 5332/3356/18]

WARSAW, April 14, 1939, 1.40 p.m.

Your telegram No. 97.¹

I informed M. Beck's Chef de Cabinet immediately.

The Prime Minister's announcement of guarantees to Greece and Roumania has been well received here. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs last night issued a statement saying that 'the Polish Government observed with interest, and as far as guarantee to Roumania is concerned, with friendly interest, position adopted by Great Britain. It was emphasized that these unilateral guarantees given by Great Britain were outside the framework of the Polish quadruple understanding and Polish-French alliances and that no fresh obligations had thereby been created for Poland'.

A similar line is taken by the Press this morning. I understand from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that the last sentence is inspired by a certain fear that German reactions may take too severe a form and not by any sort of disapproval.

Repeated to Berlin, Bucharest, Athens, Angora and Moscow.

¹ No. 59.

No. 161

Sir W. Seeds (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 14, 4.0 p.m.)
No. 63 Telegraphic [C 5330/3356/18]

MOSCOW, April 14, 1939, 4.45 p.m.

My telegram No. 61.¹

French Chargé d'Affaires who has been here many years and is in complete agreement with views expressed in my telegram, tells me that Soviet Ambassador in Paris made a statement to the French Government identical

¹ No. 52.

with that made by M. Maisky, namely that Soviet Government are ready to give sympathetic consideration to any concrete proposals.

Could not the French Government enter into conversations with Soviet Government as to assistance to be given to *France* and at the same time make it clear to Polish and Roumanian Governments that if those two countries want French assistance they must be prepared also to accept same [*sic*? some] form of help from France's ally?

Please repeat to Paris.²

Repeated to Berlin, Bucharest and Warsaw.

² A copy of this telegram was sent from the Foreign Office by bag to Paris.

No. 162

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora)

No. 111 Telegraphic [R 2796/790/7]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 14, 1939, 6.0 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 126.¹

I warmly welcome Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs' initiative and will certainly second his efforts to the best of my ability. I look to him, however, to indicate the 'precise' lines and timing of any advice he thinks I might usefully give, as well as the quarter in which he thinks it should be given.

Repeated to Sofia, Athens, Belgrade and Bucharest.

¹ No. 63.

No. 163

Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax

(Received April 14, 6.5 p.m.)

No. 286 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 5349/54/18]

BERLIN, *April 14, 1939*

Following information has been received from a source indicated in my immediately following telegram.¹

German Government are contemplating securing the return of Danzig to the Reich by Herr Hitler's birthday, April 20. Failing an amicable agreement with Poland it is intended to stage an internal revolt followed by a German military occupation. Germans believe that a clash with Poland can be avoided and that in any case Great Britain will not intervene to prevent the union of Danzig with the Reich and that failure to do so will provide Germany with an effective propaganda material in the Balkans and elsewhere. Certain military circles are said to be of the opinion that if Herr Hitler provoked a world war over Danzig his Government would collapse.

Following are my comments with which Military Attaché concurs. I agree that from the Nazi point of view Danzig is much the most attractive objective

¹ Not preserved in the Foreign Office archives. The source referred to may have been Signor Attolico.

and surprise might well be achieved. It is quite patent that an attempt may be made to incorporate Danzig in the Reich on the occasion of Herr Hitler's birthday but it seems difficult to envisage such a *coup* without a clash with Polish troops. Indeed this may be his answer to Prime Minister's statement in Parliament on April 13² but neither the Military Attaché nor I agree with the forecast of any collapse at present of Nazi Government.. On the contrary the Danzig issue would rally German people in support of their kinsfolk.

² See Parl. Deb., 5th ser., H. of C., vol. 346, cols. 5-15.

No. 164

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 14, 7.0 p.m.)

No. 110 Telegraphic [C 5322/15/18]

WARSAW, April 14, 1939, 6.25 p.m.

Your telegram No. 99.¹

As regards the minor Western Powers, Minister for Foreign Affairs told me today that after consulting his Government he was authorised to assure me of reciprocal help of Polish Government in the event of His Majesty's Government being involved in war with Germany in defence of these Powers. He begged me to convey this information to you in strict confidence.

He suggested that staff conversations should be initiated to consider problems involved and that they should be given as little publicity as possible.

Repeated to Paris and Berlin.

¹ Not printed. This telegram of April 13 summarized the conversation with the Polish Ambassador recorded in No. 50.

No. 165

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 15, 9.30 p.m.)

No. 108 Telegraphic [C 5333/3356/18]

WARSAW, April 14, 1939, 6.49 p.m.

Your telegram No. 99.¹

Minister for Foreign Affairs asked me to come and see him today and told me, speaking unofficially, that he could not but feel that our announcement of a guarantee to Roumania had been a mistake. He felt that it might prove repetition of French system of guarantees to Little Entente² and might lead to results similar to that which had occurred in Czecho-Slovakia. This did not mean that he did not intend to prosecute his conversations with Roumanian Government, but he understood that Roumanian Ambassador whom he had

¹ Not printed. See No. 164, note 1.

² The Franco-Czechoslovak Treaty of 1925 is printed in *British and Foreign State Papers*, Vol. 122, p. 287; the Franco-Roumanian Treaty of 1926 is printed *ibid.*, Vol. 125, p. 582, and the Franco-Yugoslav Treaty of 1927, *ibid.*, Vol. 127, p. 500.

not yet seen had brought from Bucharest yesterday proposals which would not be acceptable to Polish Government.

I represented to His Excellency that Roumania was the vital point in the system which we were endeavouring to create and that if she were overrun by Germany and Hungary not only would all . . .³ Roumania be at the disposal of the Axis but the whole situation in the Balkans would be seriously compromised. Further, Poland herself might find herself completely cut off in the south and her situation thus be seriously prejudiced.

Colonel Beck said that it was not so much a question of necessity of helping Roumania as manner in which some system of support were devised and referred to arguments he had used in London. I emphasised that it was illusory for Poland to hope that she could still keep Hungary out of the orbit of the Axis but Colonel Beck said that while there was one per cent. hope he did not intend to abandon it. I pointed out that His Majesty's Government would be much disappointed on learning of attitude of Polish Government and that I hoped that he would nevertheless make every effort to find a basis on which it would be possible for Poland to offer her support to Roumania no matter who the aggressor might be. Attitude of Hungary might be much influenced by knowledge that she would find a hostile Poland on her northern boundary. Colonel Beck said that in the event of war it would be more essential for Poland to consider her western than her southern frontier, but he promised me that he would continue his conversations with Roumanian Government and keep me informed of any new developments.

It may be that Colonel Beck feels that Polish army would be so seriously engaged on her western frontier that she would not be able to render Roumania any efficacious aid on her southern frontier.

I fear it will be difficult to persuade Colonel Beck to plan any adequate guarantee to Roumania and I could [*sic* ? would] therefore suggest that you should talk seriously to Polish Ambassador on the subject.

Colonel Beck told me that he was continuing to exercise all possible pressure on Hungarian Government to adopt less hostile attitude towards Roumania and his latest information from Budapest showed that this seemed to have had some effect.

Repeated to Bucharest, Angora, Paris, Budapest, Moscow and Berlin.

³ The text is here uncertain.

No. 166

Viscount Halifax to Sir W. Seeds (Moscow)

No. 70 Telegraphic [C 5281/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 14, 1939, 8.10 p.m.*

The Soviet Ambassador informed me this afternoon¹ on instructions that in view of the interest shown by His Majesty's Government in Greece and

¹ For a fuller record of the conversation, see No. 176.

Roumania, the Soviet Government were prepared to take part in giving assistance to Roumania. The Soviet Government wished to learn the views of His Majesty's Government as to the best methods by which such assistance could be given and as to the part the various Powers concerned could play in helping Roumania.

2. I thanked the Ambassador for this communication. I told him that I had been proposing to ask him to call in order to tell him of the instructions which I was sending to Your Excellency (see my immediately succeeding telegram²). Those instructions seemed to me to be in harmony with the communication which he had just made to me, and I therefore proposed to ask you to speak to M. Litvinov accordingly.

3. The Ambassador said he did not know what the Soviet Government's reaction would be to our proposal for a unilateral declaration. I observed that my proposal would only give precision to what I understood M. Stalin had said.³ But the Ambassador repeated that he was unable to say whether the Soviet Government would think such a step necessary. His instructions referred solely to Roumania.

4. I told the Ambassador that in my view the problem would always be essentially the same wherever the attack might come. This, he said, brought us back to the idea of collective security. To this I replied that there was a difference in that under the old idea of collective security we sometimes deluded ourselves into thinking that words were the same as action.

5. The Ambassador said that he had at our last interview formed the impression that our guarantee to Roumania was not imminent. I told him that although we had intended to clarify the attitude of Poland and Turkey before giving a guarantee to Roumania, the French Government thought the danger to Roumania was pressing, and we had accordingly agreed to give our guarantee forthwith. The Ambassador thought we had been right, since Roumania was in much greater danger than Poland, and the pledge we had given would steady the situation.

6. In carrying out the instructions contained in my immediately succeeding telegram you should thank M. Litvinov for the Soviet Government's communication, which is of great value and affords His Majesty's Government much satisfaction as showing that their minds and those of the Soviet Government are working on similar lines. It should enable progress to be made with the reconciliation of our own position with that of the Soviet Government.

Repeated to Paris, Bucharest, Warsaw and Angora.

² No. 170.

³ i.e. in his speech on March 10. See Volume IV of this Series, No. 452.

No. 167

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax

(Received April 15, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 109 Telegraphic [C 5334/54/18]

WARSAW, April 14, 1939, 9.0 p.m.

Your telegram 99.¹

Minister for Foreign Affairs told me today that Polish Ambassador in London had recounted to him his conversation with you regarding desirability of offering no provocation to Germany and assured me that he was fully alive to this necessity. He felt that German Government were spreading rumours of incidents with a view to discrediting Poland. Polish authorities had given strict instructions that German minority were to be treated with every possible consideration, even though their attitude had been frequently provocative.

As regards rumours of establishment of a refugee camp in Danzig zone he said they were grossly exaggerated. He thought it was possible that there were a certain number of refugees from North Poland in Danzig but did not think they amounted to one hundred. Numbers of these were suspected of espionage by Polish authorities and had therefore thought it wiser to leave Polish territory. He confirmed that German Ambassador had not yet returned from Berlin, as he was apparently awaiting further instructions and he had the impression that German Government were for the moment uncertain as to what attitude to take up as regards Danzig question.

M. Beck had this morning seen Marshal Smygly-Rydz, who felt that it was not at present necessary to take any further military precautions here as it was thought military movements in Germany were largely due to return of troops from Czecho-Slovakia to North Germany where they had previously been quartered.

Repeated to Berlin and Danzig.

¹ Not printed. See No. 164, note 1.

No. 168

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 14, 11.0 p.m.)

No. 111 Telegraphic [C 5323/13/18]

WARSAW, April 14, 1939, 9.0 p.m.

Following from Military Attaché for War Office.

Deputy Chief of Second Bureau's estimate this morning of following groupings of German troops:

East Prussia: three divisions. There were no troops at present at (? Nits) [*sic*].¹ Infantry transport, including trains, had been collected on the southern frontier of East Prussia presumably with a view to evacuation of civilian personnel from fortified area.

¹ The reference is uncertain, but may be to Lyck.

Pomerania: two or three divisions including elements of 23rd Division from Kostling and 22nd Division from Bremen.

Breslau area: 28th Division plus one regiment from the 18th Division.

Liegnitz area: 18th Division less one regiment.

Area of Troppau-Moravska-Ostrava-Olmütz: elements of 8th Division, 23rd Division from Potsdam, 3rd light Division and 5th armoured Division.

Unidentified troops had also been located north of Niesse [*sic*]² and north of Liegnitz in area Neuhammer.

2. He estimated that some seven divisions were to take part in Herr Hitler's birthday celebrations in Berlin. Troop movements, probably connected with these celebrations, included one battalion of the 2nd light Division from Gera and units of the 1st armoured Division from Weimar.

3. German garrisons on the Yugoslav frontier had definitely been placed on a 'Marschbereitschaft' basis, probably as a demonstration in connexion with Albanian *coup*.

4. He estimated the total German troops now located near Poland's western frontier at elements of some eight or nine divisions and of a further eleven or twelve divisions in Moravia and Bohemia. *Prima facie* there was no imminent threat to Poland but figures were not conclusive as troops could be moved from Berlin to the Polish frontier during the course of one night. Constant troop movements in Czecho-Slovakia, partly connected with evacuation of material, made any estimate particularly difficult. A limited number of German regulars plus S.S. units was at present in Slovakia, east of the River Waag.

5. Increased activity had been shown by German aircraft crossing over the Polish frontier, in some cases to a depth of ten kilometres, particularly in region of Pomorze, Danzig and Upper Silesia. He estimated these at some eleven incursions per day during the last two days. The aircraft concerned included civilian, fighter and bomber types.

No serious and extensive Polish-German minority incidents had taken place recently and conditions in Danzig were quiet.

Repeated to Berlin.

² The reference is uncertain, but may be to Neisse.

No. 169

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 15, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 112 Telegraphic [C 5324/3356/18]

WARSAW, April 14, 1939, 9.0 p.m.

Moscow telegram No. 63.¹

Every previously attempted line up of states of Eastern Europe to resist German aggression has been wrecked on the question of Soviet assistance. Public opinion here and even more the present Polish Government are not ripe for any alliance which would commit them in advance to accept Soviet

¹ No. 161.

help. Any pressure on our part in the manner suggested would be fatal to our efforts to secure wider Polish co-operation in consolidating the states of Eastern Europe and would stop a certain evolution of opinion now taking place here in favour of accepting Soviet technical assistance.

French Ambassador thinks Poland is becoming more resigned to the idea of Russian assistance. French Naval Attaché was given to understand by the naval authorities here that the Polish fleet might in the last resort take refuge in Russian ports and I hear there have been cases of fraternisation between Polish and Russian troops on the eastern frontier. But I still do not think that the Polish Government would at the present moment openly agree to any suggestion of Russian support.

Repeated to Moscow, Paris, Berlin and Bucharest.

No. 170

Viscount Halifax to Sir W. Seeds (Moscow)

No. 71 Telegraphic [C 5144/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 14, 1939, 10.20 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 61¹ and my immediately preceding telegram.²

1. In spite of difficulties, real or unreal, which stand in the way of any close association of the Soviet Government in the system of international collaboration which His Majesty's Government and the French Government are engaged in organising, I am reluctant to abandon my efforts to secure some measure of co-operation from the Soviet Government.

2. These difficulties arise not merely from the reluctance of certain Governments to be openly associated in any way with the Soviet Union and from any suspicion, real or assumed, that the Soviet Government may have of the intentions of His Majesty's Government and the French Government, but also—as you show in your telegram under reference—from a natural tendency of the Soviet Government to stand aloof, a tendency which may be enhanced by the very success of our efforts to secure the collaboration of other Governments.

3. We gave full weight to the Soviet proposal for a conference and we only abandoned our own suggestion for a Four-Power declaration when it was clear that the attitude of the Polish Government made its conclusion impossible. We have explained our difficulties to the Soviet Government at every stage and made clear to them the reasons why we have found it necessary to embark on the course we are now pursuing. That course has already been attended by a great measure of success, and we consider it vital to press on with it in order to secure the adherence of as many Powers as possible.

4. The Soviet Government have criticised our action on what seems to me the rather academic ground that any attempt to make a stand at one point merely diverts the probability of an attack to another. But this criticism, whether well-founded or not, seems to me to have lost a good deal of its force

¹ No. 52.

² No. 166.

now that His Majesty's Government and France have supplemented the arrangement they reached with Poland by an undertaking to go to the help of Roumania in the event of a threat to the independence of Roumania which the latter considered it vital to resist. The Soviet Union are also aware that His Majesty's Government are in consultation with the Turkish Government; and it is their intention, in concert with the French Government, to reach if possible with Turkey an agreement on the same principle as the recent agreement with Poland.

5. The situation which His Majesty's Government and the French Government contemplate, therefore, is one in which they will have given guarantees to the two countries, Poland and Roumania, which cover the greater part of the Western frontier of the Soviet Union and to a country, Turkey, which is a friendly neighbour of the Soviet Union in the Black Sea. In making these arrangements, His Majesty's Government and the French Government have not regarded the principle of reciprocity as being in all cases indispensable.

6. His Majesty's Government have noted M. Stalin's recent statement that the Soviet Union stands for the rendering of support to nations which are victims of aggression and which fight for their independence. It would therefore seem to be in complete accord with this policy were the Soviet Government now to make a public declaration on their own initiative in which, after referring to the general statement of policy alluded to above and to statements recently made by His Majesty's Government and the French Government, they would repeat that in the event of any act of aggression against any European neighbour of the Soviet Union which was resisted by the country concerned, the assistance of the Soviet Government would be available, if desired, and would be afforded in such manner as would be found most convenient. A positive declaration by the Soviet Government at the present moment would, I believe, have a steadying effect upon the international situation and would be a concrete application of the general policy of the Soviet Government as stated above.

7. I shall be glad if you will speak to M. Litvinov on the lines of the present telegram and enquire whether it would be possible for the Soviet Government to act in the sense suggested.

Repeated to Paris, Warsaw, Bucharest and Angora.

No. 171

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora)

No. 118 Telegraphic [C 5281/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, April 14, 1939, 10.35 p.m.

My telegrams to Moscow Nos. 70¹ and 71.²

1. Please inform Turkish Government in strict confidence of approach I am making to the Soviet Government and of my interview with Soviet

¹ No. 166.

² No. 170.

Ambassador today and say that in view of friendly relations of Turkish Government with the Soviet Government I do not doubt that they will sympathise and approve.

2. You should add that for the moment I am saying nothing of this to any but the French Government.

Repeated to Moscow, Paris, Warsaw and Bucharest.

No. 172

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)

No. 160 Telegraphic [C 5281/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 14, 1939, 10.55 p.m.*

My telegrams to Moscow Nos. 70¹ and 71.²

Please inform French Government in strict confidence of approach which I am making to Soviet Government and of my interview with Soviet Ambassador today and ask them whether they would be disposed to use analogous language at Moscow.

Repeated to Moscow, Warsaw, Bucharest and Angora.

¹ No. 166.

² No. 170.

No. 173

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora)

No. 119 Telegraphic [R 2851/790/7]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 14, 1939, 11.0 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 126.¹

Roumanian Minister in course of interview this afternoon at the Foreign Office said that he could assure me² that both M. Cretzianu and M. Gafencu were personally in favour of some concessions to Bulgaria so as to bring her into the orbit of the Balkan Entente. While it was impossible to consider any immediate concession, what they had in mind was a conditional one subject to a change of attitude on the part of Bulgaria.

2. Roumanian Minister was told that we were fully impressed with the importance of trying to secure Bulgaria's co-operation with the Balkan Entente and should heartily approve any contribution towards that end which the Roumanian Government were disposed to make. We had realised that Bulgarian co-operation might be secured only by concessions, some of them on the part of Roumania, but had naturally refrained ourselves from making any suggestions of this kind which was a matter entirely for the decision of the Roumanian Government.

Repeated to Sofia, Athens, Bucharest, Belgrade and Paris.

¹ No. 63.

² This word was subsequently corrected to read 'his listener'. The interview had been with Sir A. Cadogan.

No. 174

*Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) and
Sir R. Hoare (Bucharest)*

No. 105¹ Telegraphic [C 5281/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 14, 1939, 11.30 p.m.*

My telegrams to Moscow Nos. 70² and 71³ are being repeated to you for your own information only at the present stage.

Repeated to Paris, Moscow and Angora.

¹ No. 105 to Warsaw; No. 129 to Bucharest.

² No. 166.

³ No. 170.

No. 175

Minute by Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin

[N 1964/92/38]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 14, 1939*

I met M. Maisky in the corridor of the Foreign Office this afternoon and naturally exchanged some conversation on the subject of our visit to Moscow.¹ I said that we were satisfied with our visit and hoped that we would soon see a Russian delegation over here. At this he humm'd and ha'd; he said that the present situation was quite satisfactory to his Government and he did not see what there was to discuss. I told him that we had fully explained this to the Soviet authorities in Moscow, and I understood that what we had said had sufficed to persuade them that it was at any rate worth while to send a delegation to London to pursue the discussions further. He said that he thought his Government were awaiting proposals from our side. I replied that our proposals were simple and to the effect that the Soviet Government should buy more manufactured goods and consumption goods from us. He then said that he understood that M. Mikoyan had mentioned to Mr. Hudson the possibility of buying more consumption goods on a credit basis. I said that I had not heard that conversation, but that if it was so there was still a further matter for the Soviet delegation to discuss in London.

He said that he understood that neither side desired a clearing, so that proposal was already out of the way. My answer to that was that that was one of the alternative bases which we had discussed at Moscow. He then said that the possibility of a permanent Agreement seemed to be blocked by the existence of the claims question. I said that that, too, might not be insoluble. He asked whether I referred to the £6,000,000 in Baring's Bank. I said that that was one of the sources from which compensation might be found. He said that if there was a question of any fresh payments on this account it would be unacceptable to his Government, if only because of the precedent that would be created thereby. I said that this also seemed to be a question which might be profitably discussed in the negotiations here; so that it seemed to me that if a delegation came there would be plenty for it to do.

¹ i.e. Mr. Hudson's visit, March 23-7. See Volume IV of this Series, Chapter VI.

I said that there were also other questions, such as the provision of British ships for the timber trade, and extension of facilities for British business men to visit Russia. He said that if I was talking about the visa war, then that was a war started from the British side.

M. Maisky said that he had not yet seen Mr. Hudson but would be seeing him next week. I said that Mr. Hudson would be disappointed if he could not give him some definite news of the coming of the Soviet delegation. M. Maisky said that, in view of the fact that Mr. Hudson was going to the United States² there could not be any great hurry until he came back. I said that I could not speak for Mr. Hudson, but that I thought that even if he were still absent Mr. Stanley would make arrangements to receive the delegation and continue the negotiations.

F. ASHTON-GWATKIN

² Mr. Hudson visited the U.S.A. from May 8 to 19, 1939, in connexion with the opening of the New York World Fair.

No. 176

Viscount Halifax to Sir W. Seeds (Moscow)

No. 284 [C 5281/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 14, 1939*

Sir,

The Soviet Ambassador called on me this afternoon to inform me, on instructions from his Government, that, in view of the interest shown by His Majesty's Government in the fate of Greece and Roumania, the Soviet Government were prepared to take part in giving assistance to Roumania. The Soviet Government wished to learn the views of His Majesty's Government as to the best methods in which such assistance could be given and as to the part the various Powers concerned could play in helping Roumania.

2. I thanked M. Maisky for his communication and told him that I had had it in my mind to ask him to come and see me in order to tell him that I was proposing to inform the Soviet Government that I had been thinking over my last conversation with the Ambassador and had been trying to find a way of bridging the differences between our points of view, of which we both were aware. I had had it in mind that the Soviet Government might perhaps feel that the position had been modified by the guarantee which we had given to Roumania. I had been looking again at the speech of M. Stalin,¹ to which the Ambassador had drawn my attention, and had been wondering whether, in view of what we had already done for Poland and Roumania and hoped to do for Turkey, and in view of the fact that in these cases we were not insisting on strict reciprocity, the Soviet Government would consider making a similar unilateral declaration in respect of Roumania and perhaps of Poland, such as would put our two countries on a similar footing and thereby contribute towards meeting the differences in our points of view. This, I added, seemed to be in harmony with the communication which the Ambassador had just made to me, and I accordingly proposed to instruct you to

¹ See Volume IV of this Series, No. 452.

speaking to M. Litvinov on the above lines. I suggested that it might be helpful if I were also to send instructions to Warsaw and Bucharest, urging that, if the Soviet Government were to make the unilateral declarations which I had proposed, these would be unlikely to cause the Polish and Roumanian Governments any embarrassment and should be given favourable consideration.

3. M. Maisky said that he did not know what his Government's reaction would be to the proposal for unilateral declarations which I had made. I pointed out that my proposal only gave precision to what I understood that M. Stalin had said, but M. Maisky repeated that he was unable to say whether his Government would think such a step necessary. His instructions referred solely to Roumania.

4. I told M. Maisky that I had always taken the view that, wherever the attack might come, the problem which would arise would always be essentially the same. This, M. Maisky said, brought one back to the idea of collective security. To this I replied that there was, however, a difference, in that under the old idea of collective security we sometimes deluded ourselves into thinking that words were the same as action. I added that I was most grateful to the Ambassador for his communication, which I would convey immediately to the Prime Minister.

5. Before leaving, M. Maisky said that at his last interview² he had formed the impression that the guarantee from this country to Roumania was not imminent, and that he had, therefore, been completely surprised to learn yesterday of the pledge we had given, and he asked why we had changed our minds. I replied that I would tell him frankly that, although we had thought it desirable to clarify the attitude of Poland and Turkey before giving a guarantee, the French Government had felt that the danger to Roumania was pressing and that it would therefore be unwise to delay, and that we had accordingly agreed to give our guarantee forthwith. M. Maisky told me that he felt sure that we had done right. Roumania was, in his view, in much greater danger than Poland and the pledge we had given to the Roumanian Government would steady the situation.

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

² See No. 42.

No. 177

Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 15, 3.0 p.m.)

No. 290 Telegraphic [C 5344/3356/18]

BERLIN, April 15, 1939, 1.45 p.m.

My telegram No. 232.¹

Military Attaché has been informed by Polish Military Attaché that agree-

¹ Not printed. This telegram of April 5 reported rumours that Count Csaky had 'once or twice recently asked to come to Berlin' for political discussions but that Herr Hitler had withheld his consent. Count Teleki and Count Csaky visited Berlin, April 29-May 2.

ment between Germany and Hungary by which Germany undertakes military protection of Hungary will be announced on Herr Hitler's birthday.

I send this information under all reserve.

Please inform War Office.

Repeated to Budapest.

No. 178

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax

(Received April 15, 3.45 p.m.)

No. 113 Telegraphic [C 5361/3356/18]

WARSAW, *April 15, 1939, 2.0 p.m.*

My telegram No. 108.¹

French Ambassador saw the Minister for Foreign Affairs late last night and found him somewhat upset by the information received from the Polish Military Attaché in Berlin to the effect that Germany was about to conclude a military alliance with Hungary.² He nevertheless used to M. Noël the same arguments which he had to me regarding guarantee to Roumania. He had seen Roumanian Ambassador and had pointed out the Polish objections rather to the juridical form than substance of the Roumanian proposals. Roumanian Ambassador has referred back to Bucharest and M. Beck confirmed his statement to me that he may see M. Gafencu on his way through Poland next week.

2. M. Noël is of the opinion that M. Beck in the first place feels that Roumania either will not fight or will offer very small resistance to any German attack and secondly that he wishes to save his face with public opinion here by being able to say Hungary has joined the German camp owing to the Anglo-French guarantee to Roumania. I had previously suggested to M. Noël that he should reinforce my arguments in favour of Poland immediately giving guarantee to Roumania but he feels that it will be difficult to secure prompt action by Poland in that direction at present.

Repeated to Berlin, Budapest, Bucharest and Moscow.

¹ No. 165.

² See No. 177.

No. 179

Mr. Shepherd (Danzig) to Viscount Halifax

(Received April 15, 3.0 p.m.)

No. 35 Telegraphic [C 5363/54/18]

DANZIG, *April 15, 1939, 2.3 p.m.*

Warsaw telegram No. 105.¹

My United States colleague informs me that the Head of the Foreign Section of the Danzig Senate yesterday commented at length to him about the recent Anglo-Polish defence pact. Dr. Böttcher declared that he could

¹ No. 46.

not understand the policy of Poland because her integrity was already assured by German-Polish non-aggression pact and she had been offered an additional guarantee and an outlet to the Black Sea in exchange for the return to Germany of Danzig, the Corridor and Silesia. He was vague about the outlet to the Black Sea but implied that it would be to and from Roumania. He added that Germany would probably regard the Anglo-Polish Staff talks as a violation of the German-Polish pact.

Repeated to Berlin and Warsaw.

No. 180

Sir R. Lindsay (Washington) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 16, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 179 Telegraphic [C 5339/15/18]

WASHINGTON, April 15, 1939, 4.44 p.m.

Following is text of message sent last night by President to Herr Hitler and by Secretary of State to Signor Mussolini.

Begins.

You realize I am sure that throughout the world hundreds of millions of human beings are living today in constant fear of a new war or even a series of wars. The existence of this fear and the possibility of such a conflict is of definite concern to the people of the United States, for whom I speak, as it must also be to the peoples of the other nations of the entire western hemisphere. All of them know that any major war even if it were to be confined to other continents must bear heavily on them during its continuance and also for generations to come. Because of the fact that after the acute tension in which the world has been living during the past few weeks there would seem to be at least a momentary relaxation because no troops are at this moment on the march this may be an opportune moment for me to send you this message. On a previous occasion¹ I have addressed you on behalf of the settlement of political, economic and social problems by peaceful methods and without resort to war but the tide of events seems to have reverted to the threat of arms. If such threats continue, it seems inevitable that much of the world must become involved in common ruin. All the world, victor nations, vanquished nations and neutral nations will suffer. I refuse to believe that the world is of necessity such a prisoner of destiny. On the contrary it is clear that the leaders of great nations have it in their power to liberate their peoples from the disaster that impends. It is equally clear that in their own minds and in their own hearts the peoples themselves desire that their fears be ended. It is, however, unfortunately necessary to take cognizance of recent facts. Three nations in Europe and one in Africa have seen their independent existence terminated. A vast territory in another independent nation of the

¹ For President Roosevelt's appeals to Herr Hitler on September 26 and 28, 1938, see Volume II of this Series, Nos. 1105 and 1200. President Roosevelt also sent a personal message to Signor Mussolini on September 28, 1938.

Far East has been occupied by a neighbouring State. Reports, which we trust are not true, insist that further acts of aggression are contemplated against still other independent nations. Plainly the world is moving toward the moment when this situation must end in catastrophe unless a more rational way of guiding events is found. You have repeatedly asserted that you and the German people have no desire for war. If this is true there need be no war. Nothing can persuade the peoples of the earth that any governing Power has any right or need to inflict the consequences of war on its own or any other people save in the cause of self-evident home defence.

In making this statement we, as Americans, speak not through selfishness or fear or weakness. If we speak now it is with the voice of strength and with friendship for mankind. It is still clear to me that international problems can be solved at the Council table. It is therefore no answer to the plea for peaceful discussion for one side to plead that unless they receive assurances beforehand that the verdict will be theirs they will not lay aside their arms. In Conference rooms as in Courts it is necessary that both sides enter upon the discussion in good faith assuming that substantial justice will accrue to both and it is customary and necessary that they leave their arms outside the room where they confer. I am convinced that the cause of world peace would be greatly advanced if the nations of the world were to obtain a frank statement relating to the present and future policy of Governments. Because the United States, as one of the nations of the western hemisphere, is not involved in the immediate controversies which have arisen in Europe, I trust that you may be willing to make such a statement of policy to me as the head of a nation far removed from Europe in order that I, acting only with the responsibility and obligation of a friendly intermediary, may communicate such declaration to other nations now apprehensive as to the course which the policy of your Government may take. Are you willing to give assurance that your armed forces will not attack or invade the territory or possessions of the following independent nations: Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands, Belgium, Great Britain and Ireland, France, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Luxemburg, Poland, Hungary, Roumania, Yugoslavia, Russia, Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey, Iraq, the Arabias, Syria, Palestine, Egypt and Iran? Such an assurance clearly must apply not only to the present day but also to a future sufficiently long to give every opportunity to work by peaceful methods for a more permanent peace. I therefore suggest that you construe the word 'future' to apply to a minimum period of assured non-aggression, ten years at the least, a quarter of a century if we are to look that far ahead. If such assurance is given by your Government I will immediately transmit it to the Governments of the nations I have named and I will simultaneously enquire whether, as I am reasonably sure, each of the nations enumerated above will in turn give like assurance, for transmission to you.

Reciprocal assurances such as I have outlined will bring to the world an immediate measure of relief. I propose that if it is given two essential problems shall promptly be discussed in the resulting peaceful surroundings

and in those discussions the Government of the United States will gladly take part. The discussions which I have in mind relate to the most effective and immediate manner through which the peoples of the world can obtain progressive relief from the crushing burden of armament which is each day bringing them more closely to the brink of economic disaster. Simultaneously the Government of the United States would be prepared to take part in discussions looking towards the most practical manner of opening up avenues of international trade to the end that every nation of the earth may be enabled to buy and sell on equal terms in the world market as well as to possess assurance of obtaining the materials and products of peaceful economic life. At the same time those Governments other than the United States which are directly interested could undertake such political discussions as they may consider necessary or desirable. We recognise complex world problems which affect all humanity but we know that study and discussion of them must be held in an atmosphere of peace. Such an atmosphere of peace cannot exist if negotiations are overshadowed by the threat of force or by the fear of war. I think you will not misunderstand the spirit of frankness in which I send you this message. Heads of great Governments in this hour are literally responsible for the fate of humanity in the coming years. They cannot fail to hear the prayers of their peoples to be protected from the foreseeable chaos of war. History will hold them accountable for the lives and the happiness of all even unto the last.

I hope that your answer will make it possible for humanity to lose fear and regain security for many years to come.

A similar message is being addressed to the Chief of the Italian Government.

Ends.

No. 181

*Mr. Orde (Riga) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 15, 5.25 p.m.)
No. 7 Telegraphic [N 1974/1974/38]*

RIGA, April 15, 1939, 5.51 p.m.

Minister for Foreign Affairs whom I had been on the point of questioning on the subject sent for me this morning and said that in view of certain incorrect reports which were appearing in German and Polish press as a result of a leakage at Tallinn he wished to give me, for the information of His Majesty's Government only, the facts about a recent *démarche* by the Soviet Government. M. Litvinov had told Latvian Minister in Moscow on March 29 that any voluntary or forced alienation of Latvian independence (whether whole or partial, I understood) would affect Soviet Union, which could not remain a disinterested spectator. A similar statement had been made to Estonian Minister. No indication had been given of what sort of action the Soviet Government might take.

After consultation with Estonian Government, Latvian Government had

replied on April 7 to the effect that friendly interest shown was appreciated, that Latvia was determined to preserve her independence and integrity and would not allow any foreign influence on her foreign, internal, or economic policy. Question of accepting foreign assistance, if it came to that, was one which Latvian Government would have to decide. A similar reply had been given to [sic ? by] Estonian Government.

Soviet had wished for publicity but Latvian Government opposed it, being unwilling to provide further material for international controversy. Minister for Foreign Affairs thought nevertheless that if Soviet and Estonian Governments wished to have a statement issued Latvian Government would give way.

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Latvian Government wished His Majesty's Government to have the above information in view of initiative they had given, which was generally approved here, and of particularly friendly relations between His Majesty's Government and Latvia.

Minister for Foreign Affairs added in the course of conversation that he did not expect Soviet Government to march into Latvia to anticipate Germans. They had not sufficient interest here but would be strategically interested in preventing the establishment of any German base in or at the entrance to the Gulf of Finland.

Repeated to Moscow.

No. 182

*Sir W. Seeds (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 15, 7.10 p.m.)
No. 65 Telegraphic [C 5331/3356/18]*

MOSCOW, April 15, 1939, 7.44 p.m.

Your telegram No. 71.¹

I spoke to M. Litvinov as instructed. He gave proposal a friendly hearing and promised to consult his Government. He was inclined to think that a unilateral declaration bound the Soviet Government without committing anyone else and without . . .² nature or method of assistance which might be required from this country. I pointed out that His Majesty's Government were committed up to the hilt, that question of actual assistance was too complicated and too dependent on the course of events to allow of settlement at present, and that a unilateral declaration was most consonant with the position of Soviet Union as a Great Power.

2. (M. Litvinov?)² said that French Government had started conversations with Soviet Ambassador at Paris as regards mutual military assistance.

3. He told me he had just instructed Soviet Ambassador in London to come to Moscow for consultation.

Repeated to Angora, Bucharest, Paris and Warsaw.

¹ No. 170.

² The text is here uncertain.

No. 183

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 15, 10.0 p.m.)
No. 169 Telegraphic [C 5337/3356/18]

PARIS, April 15, 1939, 7.55 p.m.

Your telegram No. 160.¹

Minister for Foreign Affairs tells me he had suggested yesterday to the Soviet Ambassador in Paris that an Annex should be added to Franco-Soviet Pact whereby Russia would undertake to come to the assistance of France if the latter found herself at war with Germany through bringing help to Poland or Roumania.

M. Bonnet, however, prefers your suggestion and will so inform the Soviet Ambassador this afternoon and will instruct the French Ambassador at Moscow as desired.

Repeated to Moscow, Warsaw, Bucharest and Angora.

¹ No. 172.

No. 184

Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 15, 10.0 p.m.)
No. 295 Telegraphic [C 5348/3356/18]

BERLIN, April 15, 1939, 8.38 p.m.

My telegram No. 265.¹

I venture to state points which I consider to be salient in the present situation as viewed from this post.

(i) The idea that [*sic* ? of] encirclement which I have stressed in previous telegrams is gaining ground and is becoming an increasingly dangerous weapon of propaganda. Memories of bloodshed in . . .² war and overwhelming sufferings of the civilian population were revived.

(ii) This leads to question of an anti-aggression Pact with Turkey and I am warned by a friend and a well informed colleague that the conclusion of such an agreement will provoke great and dangerous indignation in high Nazi quarters and may well bring war much nearer. Another point of danger is alleged; the increasing hostile attitude of Poland, objections to visit of M. Beck to London and especially over questions of Danzig [? and] Corridor. In this connexion it is alleged that Germans are prepared to guarantee Danzig's economic privileges and existence of Polish Corridor in return for the right to construct a German corridor across the Corridor and also to end the discontent in a twenty-five year Pact, see your telegram No. 99 to Warsaw³ paragraph 5.

(iv) [*sic*] Danzig in itself is a matter of present anxiety in view of approach of Herr Hitler's birthday. I asked my Italian colleague point blank whether

¹ Not printed. This telegram of April 9 contained an appreciation of the German attitude to the Italian occupation of Albania.

² The text is here uncertain.

³ Not printed. See No. 164, note 1.

he thought anything would happen there during the next few days. He replied that he was yesterday informed in the negative.

Repeated to Rome, Warsaw and Paris.

No. 185

Sir R. Hoare (Bucharest) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 16, 10.0 a.m.)
No. 127 Telegraphic [C 5335/3356/18]

BUCHAREST, April 15, 1939, 9.0 p.m.

...¹ suggests that Roumanian Minister for Foreign Affairs be given through His Majesty's Chargé d'Affaires Berlin an outline of state of discussions with the Soviet Government as it cannot be excluded that the latter will give the matter immediate publicity. If Roumanian Minister for Foreign Affairs were not in possession of authentic information and he were attacked by the Germans I feel that he would be placed in an unnecessarily embarrassing position. It will be difficult enough anyhow.²

¹ The text is here uncertain.

² It was decided to await M. Gafencu's arrival in London before informing him of the state of the discussions with the Soviet Government. For the conversations during M. Gafencu's visit to London see Nos. 278, 279, 285, and 295.

No. 186

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 16, 10.0 p.m.)¹
No. 171 Telegraphic [C 5338/3356/18]

PARIS, April 15, 1939, 10.55 p.m.

My telegram No. 169.²

Minister for Foreign Affairs, after talking to President of the Council and to Soviet Ambassador, says that the original French suggestion, owing to less publicity that it would have received than a public statement by Stalin, or M. Litvinov, might have been preferable.

French Government, nevertheless, will instruct Ambassador at Moscow in the sense desired by us.

Repeated to Moscow, Bucharest, Warsaw and Angora.

¹ This time appears to be an error for 10 a.m.

² No. 183.

No. 187

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 16, 10.0 a.m.)
No. 114 Telegraphic [C 5362/3356/18]

WARSAW, April 15, 1939, 11.41 p.m.

My telegram No. 113.¹

I learn that Roumanian proposal was that as the Treaty of Alliance between Poland and Roumania² does not define the aggressor and only

¹ No. 178.

² See No. 1, note 3. The Military Convention was not published.

Russia is mentioned in the Military Convention, Poland should now bind herself to support Roumania if the latter is attacked by Germany.

M. Beck did not like this formula his reason being that when the treaty was concluded, Germany had not been thought of as a possible aggressor. It has however been arranged that he should travel with Roumanian Minister for Foreign Affairs on his way through Poland on April 17 and endeavour to reach some understanding.

Roumanian Ambassador . . .³ feels that Poland will have to support Roumania if the latter is attacked, is of the opinion that M. Beck wishes to avoid at all costs further irritating Germany by giving publicity to this fact.

Repeated to Bucharest, Budapest and Berlin.

³ The text is here uncertain.

No. 188

Text of a communiqué issued to the Press¹

[C 5431/15/18]

April 15, 1939

The President's initiative came as a surprise to the British Government although the Prime Minister and Lord Halifax were informed of the terms of the President's message shortly before its publication.² Both the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary, on behalf of His Majesty's Government, warmly welcome the President's action and have authorised the issue of the following statement:

His Majesty's Government learned with cordial approval of the message which was communicated last night to the Chancellor of the German Reich and to the Head of the Italian Government, by the President of the United States of America and which has now been issued to the Press.

His Majesty's Government entirely endorse the President's estimate of the international situation. They believe that the statesmanlike initiative which President Roosevelt has been inspired to take offers a real opportunity of averting the catastrophe which overhangs Europe and which, they are convinced, is feared in every country.

The replies from Germany and Italy must now be awaited. His Majesty's Government, for their part, desire to express the firm hope that those replies will open the way to the further steps of which the President speaks.

¹ This communiqué was issued to the Press in the names of the Prime Minister and Lord Halifax.

² The text of President Roosevelt's message was communicated to the Foreign Office by the U.S. Embassy in London on the morning of April 15. It was released for publication in Washington at 2.30 p.m. G.M.T. See also No. 180.

No. 189

The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax

(Received April 16, 10.0 a.m.)

No. 342 Telegraphic [R 2892/1/22]

ROME, April 16, 1939, 12.15 a.m.

Following reference to Great Britain was made by Minister for Foreign Affairs in speech this afternoon¹ on Albanian question.

The polemics and Parliamentary debates which have taken place abroad in the last few days have been followed by us with due attention. Speech made in House of Commons by British Prime Minister is very recent.² He gave a long detailed account of events based on information which might have merited a closer control. I must also observe that, too preoccupied with chronicling events, he forgot history. Diagnosis of our relations with Albania cannot be made through a more or less reliable examination of events of 7th and 8th April; it is necessary to go back much further in order to realise the spirit of the situation and to judge with a real knowledge of the case.

Where, however, we are in agreement with Mr. Chamberlain is in conclusions of his speech in so far as concerns the maintenance in force of Anglo-Italian Agreement. Nothing that has happened could justify an alteration in it. We too on our part attribute great value to agreements concluded last April between us and England and we are animated by an equal will to maintain them as valid and operative by means of execution and observance of all their clauses as we have done until now. And since Mr. Chamberlain has spoken of repatriation of our volunteers in Spain we confirm that the valorous legions which have made so precious a contribution of faith and blood to the cause of European civilisation will return in triumph to their country after receiving the well deserved prize and honour of marching through the streets of Madrid in the presence of General Franco.

Summary of remainder of speech is contained in my saving telegram 120.³

¹ This telegram was drafted on April 15. The speech was made in the Chamber on the occasion of the acknowledgment of the King of Italy as King of Albania.

² The reference is presumably to Mr. Chamberlain's speech on April 13. See Parl. Deb., 5th ser., H. of C., vol. 346, cols. 5-15.

³ Not printed.

No. 190

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax

(Received April 16, 4.30 a.m.)

No. 134 Telegraphic [R 2888/661/67]

ANGORA, April 16, 1939, 1.30 a.m.

My immediately preceding telegram.¹

I would offer following observations on Turkish reply.

¹ Not printed. This telegram contained an English translation of the Turkish reply printed below in No. 199.

(a) Point 1 in summary at end. Minister for Foreign Affairs explained that by 'give the clear impression' etc. he meant impression to public opinion.

(b) Points 2 and 5. These clearly show the necessity for informing the Turkish Government of plan for co-operation in war; reference in point 5 to 'scheme mentioned in British *aide-mémoire*' is to last sentence of paragraph 4 of your telegram No. 98.² See also my telegrams Nos. 112³ and 131.⁴

(c) Point 3. At the same interview with Minister for Foreign Affairs I acted on your telegram No. 118.⁵

Point 4. I informed His Excellency of your telegram No. 111⁶ and of substance of your telegram No. 119.⁷

Point 6. I would draw attention to the Turkish requirement of secrecy.

I have shown Turkish reply to my French colleague who will receive copy forthwith.

At close of my conversation with Minister for Foreign Affairs in reply to my enquiry he renewed general assurance of Turkish co-operation in the event of war in the Balkans or the Mediterranean or of a general war.

Repeated to Paris, Warsaw, Bucharest, Athens, Sofia, Belgrade, Rome and Moscow.

² No. 138.

³ No. 124.

⁴ No. 158.

⁵ No. 171.

⁶ No. 162.

⁷ No. 173.

No. 191

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 16, 5.20 p.m.)

No. 135 Telegraphic [R 2889/661/67]

ANGORA, April 16, 1939, 3.50 p.m.

My telegram No. 134.¹

I said to Minister for Foreign Affairs this morning that my reading of Turkish reply² was that it amounted in fact to a promise of support in all eventualities contemplated in your telegram No. 98³ or⁴ if Great Britain were attacked in the West *only* and not in the Mediterranean, Turkey would remain neutral. He said this was the position. He added that probability of such a limited attack could in practice be almost entirely ruled out. In view of general assurances given by Turkish Government of the solidarity with ourselves, my view is that this point should not prove important. Moreover Minister for Foreign Affairs observed that his view was that it was a necessity to proceed by stages in organising mutual support. If therefore we reach this point later our mutual position and obligations may by then be better defined.

Repeated to Paris, Warsaw, Bucharest, Athens, Sofia, Belgrade, Rome and Moscow.

¹ No. 190.

² See No. 199.

³ No. 138.

⁴ In a telegram from Angora of April 18, this word was corrected to read '...except that if Great Britain', &c.

No. 192

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora)

No. 121 Telegraphic [R 2796/790/7]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 16, 1939, 5.0 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 126¹, paragraph 2.

1. Am I right in assuming that Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs' idea is to try and negotiate entry of Bulgaria into Balkan Entente first and only once this has been achieved to proceed to negotiate guarantee of non-Balkan frontiers of countries thus forming the Entente? Is His Excellency aiming at a mutual guarantee of such frontiers between the parties of the Entente or only at an unilateral Turkish one?

2. I should be grateful for any light you can throw on the above.

Repeated to Sofia, Athens, Belgrade and Bucharest.

¹ No. 63.

No. 193

Sir W. Seeds (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 17, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 66 Telegraphic [C 5382/3356/18]

MOSCOW, *April 17, 1939, 12.57 a.m.*

My immediately preceding telegram.¹

I saw M. Litvinov again this afternoon.² He said that the Soviet Government wished first of all to have reply to enquiry made by their Ambassador (your telegram No. 70³) as to nature of assistance which would be required from the various Powers concerned for protection of Roumania.

2. I reminded him of what you had said to the Ambassador at the time and of appreciation which I had conveyed to M. Litvinov personally yesterday in accordance with your instructions, when I had pointed out that your proposal for a declaration was not only in harmony with the Ambassador's communication but also extended it in accordance with the Soviet Government's own idea that it was advisable to cover as many points as possible instead of only one.

3. He said that the Ambassador had been, on his Government's instructions, answering a specific question you had addressed to him on April 11: Soviet Government had through the Ambassador replied to His Majesty's Government that they were ready in principle to come to Roumania's assistance but that they wanted to know how far Great Britain and other countries were prepared to go when it came to the point and what was expected from the Soviet Union. They wanted an answer to that before considering a declaration which if made at present would commit them blindly. To my argument that examination of the means of assistance would

¹ No. 182.

² This telegram was drafted on April 16.

³ No. 166.

take time, M. Litvinov asked why there was any need for urgency. Did we really think an attack was imminent? What were Poland and Roumania doing? Negotiating perhaps with Germany? Roumanian Minister for Foreign Affairs was going to Berlin and it would be foolish to make a declaration at a time when Roumania might be willingly signing away something at Germany's command.

5. [*sic*] I pointed out that engagements which His Majesty's Government had taken were an answer to those questions: we had made our position clear to the world and hoped that Soviet Union would similarly announce publicly the determination to help the victims of aggression; we knew and welcomed Soviet Government's readiness to assist Roumania but Europe was still in the dark. He said when pressed it might come to a public declaration but repeated that at present they must have the facts to go on. He again referred to the deliberate abstention of Polish and Roumanian Governments from considering the question of this assistance and said that the Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs had been unable to extract from the Roumanian Minister for Foreign Affairs during his visit to Angora anything beyond vague assertion that Roumania desired good relations with Soviet Union.⁴

6. [*sic*] On terminating a friendly interview I said while disappointed I was glad that the Soviet Government's attitude in regard to assistance to Roumania marked at any rate a step in advance.

Repeated to Angora, Bucharest, Paris and Warsaw.

⁴ For M. Gafencu's account of his visit to Istanbul at Easter see No. 278.

No. 194

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 17, 7.30 p.m.)
No. 173 Telegraphic [R 2981/399/22]

PARIS, April 17, 1939, 5.35 p.m.

Minister for Foreign Affairs lunched here today.

His Excellency feels that the present state of tension cannot last much longer and that the question of peace or war may well be decided within the next two or three weeks.

He hears from the French Ambassadors at the Vatican and the Quirinal that there is still time to prevent Signor Mussolini entirely throwing in his lot with Herr Hitler (Cardinal Secretary of State was very definite on this point) and he is convinced that we can obtain Franco's neutrality in case of war.

M. Bonnet therefore urges His Majesty's Government to send Sir P. Loraine to Rome as soon as possible,¹ without hesitating too much over the

¹ Lord Perth was instructed on April 17 to inquire whether the Italian Government would accept Sir P. Loraine's credentials, which had been signed on March 28 and therefore contained no reference to Albania. Count Ciano at first said they could not be accepted, and Lord Perth was instructed to refer the matter to Signor Mussolini at his final interview on April 20. He was then told that in view of the date of the signature of the credentials they would be accepted as they stood.

question of recognition of the Italian Kingdom of Albania. The French Government will be ready to make reasonable concessions to Italy over the Suez Canal and Jibuti etc. and they feel that presence of Sir P. Loraine may just turn the scale and make Italians reasonable.

M. Bonnet also thinks that the next few weeks may be vital at Burgos. I suggested that Marshal Pétain² would have a most important part to play there. His Excellency promised me that he would be instructed to play it. I said we both had the whip-hand over Spaniards in sphere of capital and credits and that we must refuse these obdurately until we had really solid guarantees from General Franco regarding our vital interests. M. Bonnet affected to agree.

² Marshal Pétain had been appointed French Ambassador to Spain on March 2.

No. 195

Mr. Snow (Helsingfors) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 17, 6.30 p.m.)
Unnumbered Telegraphic [N 1987/1974/38]

HELSINGFORS, April 17, 1939, 5.46 p.m.

Situation report April 17.

Soviet offer to assist this country however phrased would be likely to have a not reassuring effect here but the reverse. Finns do not trust Russian undertakings. Having had one experience of Red troops on Finnish soil they are not anxious for another. Moreover an undertaking would seem likely to pave the way for similar undertaking to Finland by Germany, which would be welcome in certain influential quarters here. See my telegram No. 15¹ paragraph 8.

As to embarrassment which the offer would be likely to cause Finnish Government, please compare last part of paragraph 5 of my despatch No. 177¹ of last year.

While in the circumstances I fear that the main effect of suggested offer to Finns would be to create an unfortunate impression which by repercussion would damage ourselves, I feel convinced Your Lordship is familiar with the facts which I have so often reported and has offset probable effects here against the advantages to be anticipated in the spheres outside the field of view of this post.

Repeated to Moscow.

¹ Not printed.

No. 196

Sir W. Seeds (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 17, 8.15 p.m.)
No. 68 Telegraphic [C 5470/3356/18]

MOSCOW, April 17, 1939, 6.50 p.m.

My telegram No. 66.¹

Having carefully considered yesterday and read 'Manchester Guardian'

¹ No. 193.

and 'Daily Herald' up to the issues of April 13 I would summarize position as it appeared from the Soviet angle yesterday as follows:—

- (a) British Opposition press, on which this Government naturally feed, justified old misstatement that we do not mean business and Soviet fears that this country is to be manoeuvred into holding the baby;
- (b) The Soviet Government, having instructed Ambassador to express readiness in principle to give assistance *if* they can be assured that His Majesty's Government and others will actively implement declarations regarding Roumania, only received a suggestion for a unilateral declaration by this country.

2. Hence M. Litvinov's questions to me (which I only summarize in my telegram): how do we know that Great Britain will declare war in case of armed aggression? Will she only lodge protest or not even that? Hence M. Potemkin's statement recently to French Chargé d'Affaires that the Soviet Government were hampered by apparent British reluctance to be bound down to anything definite, hence M. Litvinov's remark to me that he had summoned M. Maisky in order to ask him why he had not insisted on reply from Your Lordship on April 14.

3. I would add for purposes of record that according to telegram which M. Litvinov read to me you asked Soviet Ambassador on April 11² 'what form of assistance Soviet Government could give' in matter of Roumania.

Repeated to Angora, Bucharest, Paris and Warsaw.

² See No. 42.

No. 197

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw)

No. 109 Telegraphic [C 5349/54/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 17, 1939, 11.0 p.m.*

Berlin telegram No. 286.¹

You should inform Colonel Beck of the report which has reached us that the German Government are planning that Danzig shall have returned to the Reich by Hitler's birthday, and that failing an amicable agreement with Poland it is intended with this object to stage an internal revolt, followed by a German military occupation. You should ask Colonel Beck whether he has any information which bears out this report and what credence he would attach to it.

2. I am by no means clear as to what the present position is as between the Polish and German Governments in respect of the Danzig problem, and I should hesitate to give any advice. But if there is the least likelihood of the German Government planning a *coup de main* and if the Polish Government are in fact prepared to treat with Germany for a settlement of the Danzig question, would it not be well for the Polish Government to do what is possible

¹ No. 163.

to cut the ground from under the feet of the German Government by showing their disposition to negotiate?

3. I should be glad if you would put this to Colonel Beck and ask for his views.

Repeated to Berlin.

No. 198

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)

No. 919 [C 5365/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 17, 1939*

Sir,

The French Ambassador referred in conversation with Sir Alexander Cadogan on April 15 to what had appeared in the morning press regarding British consultation with the Soviet Government. He was given a short account of what had passed at my interview with M. Maisky on April 14 recorded in my despatch No. 284 to Moscow¹ and told that Your Excellency had already been instructed to give the French Government full information on this subject.

2. M. Corbin said that a little while ago the French Government had enquired of the Soviet Government whether the latter would be prepared to assist Poland and Roumania in resistance to any threat to their independence. The Soviet reply had been to the effect that the Soviet Government had no obligations in regard to those countries. The French Government had thereupon made a somewhat different approach to the Soviet Government enquiring in what way the latter might in the event of hostilities be able and willing to render assistance provided that would be acceptable. The Soviet Government had given a reply in which they indicated that some condition of reciprocity would be desired. M. Corbin said that the French Government had since submitted a further formula to the Soviet Government taking account of this request for reciprocity, but he added that he had not yet received the text of this formula, of which however he undertook to communicate a copy to Sir Alexander Cadogan as soon as possible.

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

¹ No. 176.

No. 199

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 27)

No. 201 [R 3335/661/67]

ANGORA, *April 17, 1939*

His Majesty's Representative in Turkey presents his compliments to His Majesty's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and with reference to Angora

telegram No. 133¹ has the honour to transmit herewith copy of a letter from the Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs enclosing Turkish proposals for collaboration with Great Britain in the event of war.

¹ Not printed. See No. 190, note 1.

ENCLOSURE 1 IN NO. 199

ANKARA, *le 15 avril 1939*

Mon cher Ambassadeur,

J'ai eu l'honneur de recevoir la lettre en date du 13 avril 1939 que Votre Excellence a bien voulu me faire parvenir pour me transmettre le texte écrit de la communication orale que vous m'avez faite au nom du Gouvernement de Sa Majesté.¹

Je m'empresse, en réponse, de Vous adresser, ci-inclus, le texte de la communication orale que j'ai eu l'honneur de Vous faire au nom du Gouvernement de la République et Vous prie d'agréer, mon cher Ambassadeur, l'assurance de ma très haute considération.

S. SARACOGLU

¹ Not printed. This communication followed the text of the instructions sent to Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen in Foreign Office telegram No. 98. See No. 138.

ENCLOSURE 2 IN NO. 199

La domination de l'Europe par les Puissances de l'Axe et la mise en danger de l'existence des petits Pays constituent des éventualités en opposition totale avec les intérêts de la Paix générale et ceux particuliers et prédominants de la Turquie, même si celle-ci ne formait pas l'objet direct de menaces ou agression quelconques. Ceci d'autant plus que l'éventualité d'une domination italienne dans la Méditerranée forme pour la Turquie un danger aussi évident que pour l'Angleterre.

Cette manière de voir qui est fondamentale pour la Turquie montre clairement le parallélisme existant dans la conjoncture actuelle entre les intérêts de la Turquie et ceux de la Grande-Bretagne.

Le Ministre des Affaires Étrangères croit devoir exposer les considérations suivantes en vue de déterminer sans équivoque possible la ligne de conduite que le Gouvernement Turc se propose de suivre dans le domaine pratique en présence de la situation ci-dessus définie.

Si la Turquie prend dès maintenant ouvertement position contre les Puissances de l'Axe il s'en suivrait, au cas où celles-ci seraient déterminées à déclencher une nouvelle guerre générale, l'accumulation dans un très bref délai de toutes les forces adverses sur les Détroits. Cette probabilité conduit la Turquie, qui aurait dès lors à supporter toute la pression de l'Axe, à vouloir être préalablement fixée sur l'aide que l'Angleterre et éventuellement la France et l'Union Soviétique pourraient effectivement lui fournir. C'est un élément indispensable pour les préparatifs à faire par la Turquie.

Il est un fait certain que pour arriver à une décision en ce qui concerne les exigences de la situation actuelle le Gouvernement de la République est obligé de savoir très exactement la ligne de conduite que l'Union Soviétique

se propose de suivre en cette occurrence. Les démarches faites à [sic ? à] ce sujet auprès du Gouvernement de Moscou n'ont pas encore donné de résultats susceptibles d'éclairer le Gouvernement Turc.

Il y a lieu de remarquer d'autre part, que la charge devant peser sur la Turquie pour la défense des Détroits est tellement lourde et importante qu'il ne serait ni possible ni conforme à l'intérêt commun de distraire les forces turques d'un tel objectif pour les envoyer au secours de la Roumanie.

Il est également à craindre que la prise immédiate de position par la Turquie contre les Puissances de l'Axe n'attribue à la Bulgarie une importance plus grande et n'augmente ainsi son intransigeance.

Or, le maintien de la solidarité balkanique et l'empêchement opposé à la pénétration dans cette région de l'influence de l'Axe sont de la part de la Turquie une contribution des plus efficaces à la cause de la paix générale et il y aurait intérêt à laisser continuer le Gouvernement de la République à remplir comme jusqu'ici ce rôle prédominant.

Le point de vue ci-dessus exposé peut, pour aujourd'hui, être résumé de la manière suivante :

- I. En vue de préparer l'action envisagée suivant le développement des circonstances, donner une impression nette que la Turquie suit une politique parallèle avec celle de l'Angleterre ou bien sympathique à celle-ci dans l'intérêt général de la paix et faire connaître en même temps qu'à moins que les Puissances de l'Axe ne se livrent à une agression dans la Méditerranée ou contre les Balkans, la Turquie gardera sa neutralité;
- II. Convenir de l'aide britannique pour les préparatifs envisagés de défense des Détroits contre une agression terrestre des Puissances de l'Axe, préparatifs auxquels la Turquie s'est livrée d'ores et déjà.
- III. S'efforcer d'assurer la collaboration de l'Union Soviétique.
- IV. L'appui de l'Angleterre aux efforts déployés par la Turquie en vue de régler les différends bulgaro-roumains.
- V. L'action commune de la Turquie avec la Grande-Bretagne étant assurée dans l'éventualité de l'assistance mutuelle, faire la communication au Gouvernement Turc du projet mentionné dans l'aide-mémoire britannique.
- VI. Assurer le secret absolu des dispositions précédentes ainsi que des conversations s'y rapportant.

No. 200

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 18, 6.35 a.m.)

No. 137 Telegraphic [R 2985/661/67]

ANGORA, April 18, 1939, 12.43 a.m.

Local News Agency produces report of announcement by Press Association that Prime Minister will make on April 18 in House of Commons a short

statement on international situation, that he will 'announce the adherence of Turkey to anti-aggression pact'.

Minister for Foreign Affairs has drawn my attention to this statement which causes him anxiety. He reminds me of conditions of secrecy attached by him to present negotiations (see my telegram No. 133¹) and expresses hope that any statement by Prime Minister may be limited to a general reference to sympathy and good relations which exist between the two countries.²

¹ See No. 190, note 1, and No. 199.

² Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen was instructed by telegram on April 18 to assure the Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs that there was 'no truth whatever' in the Press Association's report.

No. 201

Sir W. Seeds (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 18, 6.35 a.m.)
No. 69 Telegraphic [C 5460/15/18]

MOSCOW, April 18, 1939, 4.26 a.m.

My immediately preceding telegram.¹

M. Litvinov has now handed me in writing following proposal which is also being communicated to French Government through Soviet Ambassador in Paris.

'Subsequent to English enquiry regarding consent of U.S.S.R. to render assistance to . . . ing² on its borders against aggressors, Soviet Government also received a French proposal on lines of bilateral obligations regarding mutual assistance against aggressors. As we regard this proposal as an acceptable one in principle and wish to extend M. Bonnet's idea, and as we are also desirous of placing relations between the three States on a solid foundation, we are endeavouring to combine English and French proposals in the form of following propositions which we submit for consideration of British Government:

1. England, France and U.S.S.R. to conclude with one another an agreement for a period of five to ten years by which they would oblige themselves to render mutually forthwith all manner of assistance, including that of a military nature, in case of aggression in Europe against any one of the contracting Powers.
2. England, France and U.S.S.R. to undertake to render all manner of assistance, including that of a military nature, to Eastern European States situated between Baltic and Black Seas and bordering on U.S.S.R., in case of aggression against these States.
3. England, France and U.S.S.R. to undertake to discuss and to settle within shortest period of time extent and forms of military assistance to be rendered by each of these States in fulfilment of paragraphs 1 and 2.

¹ No. 196.

² The text is here uncertain.

4. English Government to explain that assistance recently promised to Poland concerns exclusively aggression on the part of Germany.
5. The treaty alliance which exists between Poland and Roumania is to be declared operative in case of aggression of any nature against Poland and Roumania, or else to be revoked altogether as one directed against U.S.S.R.
6. England, France and U.S.S.R. to undertake following outbreak of hostilities not to enter into negotiations of any kind whatsoever and not to conclude peace with aggressors separately from one another and without common consent of the three Powers.
7. An agreement on above lines to be signed simultaneously with terms of convention which has been described above under paragraph 3.
8. The necessity is recognised for England, France (? and U.S.S.R.)² to enter into joint negotiations with Turkey having in view conclusion of a special agreement on mutual assistance'.

M. Litvinov explained that French Chargé d'Affaires, when supporting yesterday His Majesty's Government's proposal for a unilateral declaration by Soviet Government, had stated French Government were not thereby withdrawing their own proposal for a Franco-Soviet Pact of mutual assistance. Present Soviet proposal was as stated above a combination of both, clause 2 being specially designed to meet His Majesty's Government's suggestion.

Clause 4 was, he said, inserted because recent British declaration of assistance to Poland might be read as implying the possibility of aggression by Soviet Union.

Clause 5 was required in view of the fact that existing Polish-Roumanian Treaty had been originally aimed at the Soviet Union only.

Clause 7 was necessary as previous experience had shown that difficulties arose where military agreements were only negotiated subsequently to political conventions.

Clause 8 was designed to cover possibility that Turkish Government might wish to confine its liabilities to Balkan or Mediterranean areas.

Repeated to Angora, Bucharest, Paris and Warsaw.

No. 202

*Sir A. Ryan (Durazzo) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 18, 1.0 p.m.)
No. 51 Telegraphic [R 2990/1335/90]*

DURAZZO, April 18, 1939, 9.0 a.m.

French, Greek, Turkish, United States Ministers and myself have decided to express to our respective Governments our complete disbelief in account given by Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs in his speech of April 15¹ of events leading up to Italian occupation of Albania. We cannot credit his

¹ See No. 189.

description of negotiations with King Zog from March 8 onwards and we know for a fact that there was no danger to Italian lives or interests.

My French colleague and myself while agreeing entirely with the views expressed above do not think it necessary to refute statements of the Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs in detail as they closely resemble those which he made to His Majesty's Ambassador at Rome on April 4 and on which we have both already commented (see enclosure in my letter of April 11² to Mr. Ingram and my despatch No. 45³). He is reported to have added in his speech statement that King Zog relied on illusory assurances of democratic Powers. This is palpably false as the Powers in question certainly offered no such assurances of their own initiative and we now believe that Albanian Government had been prevented from even seeking them by the threat that if Italian terms were revealed that alone would be ground for occupation. Date of this threat cannot be fixed but the fact that it had been used was disclosed to Greek Minister by a person in the King's confidence on April 5.

This joint though not identic action was suggested by my United States colleague who does not however wish to be represented as the prime mover. He was anxious that we should express our views without delay and we therefore based ourselves on his notes of wireless report of speech, exact text of which was not yet available this morning when I discussed the matter with him and French and Greek Ministers. My Turkish colleague was not present but had signified his concurrence to Greek Minister. While agreeing to joint and speedy effort to counteract the effect of public utterance of Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs I emphasised the importance of distinguishing between the statements which we regard as highly improbable and those which we know to be untrue.

Repeated to Rome.

² No. 133.

³ No. 159.

No. 203

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 18, 8.0 p.m.)

No. 138 Telegraphic [R 3021/661/67]

ANGORA, April 18, 1939, 5.6 p.m.

My telegram No. 133.¹

My French colleague who is a little uneasy at what he considers a lack of definition in the Turkish reply gave the Minister for Foreign Affairs on April 17 an oral communication to the following effect.

Begin:—In consideration of the guarantees given to Greece and Roumania by the French and British Governments, the French Government hopes that the Turkish Government will on its side agree to give assistance in the same conditions to Greece and Roumania. Moreover the French Government is prepared to give to the Turkish Government jointly with

¹ Not printed. See No. 190, note 1.

British Government on basis of reciprocity its support against any attack by Italy against Turkey in the Mediterranean and also against any German attack against Turkey, ends.

Minister for Foreign Affairs mentioned this to me last night. I doubt whether he will pay much attention to it pending the receipt of the views of the French Government on his reply to our proposals.

When approached by my French colleague I said that I had no objection to his making this communication but that for myself I intended to await your views on the Turkish reply.

I have since received and acted on your telegram No. 123.²

Repeated to Paris.

² Not printed. This telegram of April 17 instructed Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen to inform the Turkish Government that the questions raised by their reply of April 15 were being urgently considered by His Majesty's Government, and that they hoped to reply within 24 hours.

No. 204

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 18, 7.0 p.m.)
No. 116 Telegraphic [C 5682/3356/18]

WARSAW, April 18, 1939, 5.29 p.m.

Following for Sir A. Cadogan.

Would you please let me know if you wish for my considered views on Moscow telegram No. 69?¹

Soviet proposals seem to me most objectionable from Polish Government's point of view. Any idea that such proposals had even been put forward would be liable to jeopardize possibility of Polish-Soviet co-operation.²

¹ No. 201.

² No reply was sent to this telegram, in view of later comments by Sir H. Kennard on this subject. (See No. 222.)

No. 205

Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 18, 8.0 p.m.)
No. 310 Telegraphic [C 5549/54/18]

BERLIN, April 18, 1939, 6.43 p.m.

Your telegram No. 109 to Warsaw.¹

To sum up my previous reports, view of the present position as between Polish and German Governments in respect of Danzig problem is that Herr Hitler is handling the matter personally and making proposals mainly in Warsaw which are not meeting with much success. Preparations are at the same time being made for union of Danzig with the Reich by fair means or

¹ No. 197.

foul in the event of negotiations failing. It is impossible to forecast when Herr Hitler may press the button but the Italian Ambassador recently told me he was informed there would be no *coup de main* for Herr Hitler's birthday and my latest information from Polish sources is that failing an amicable settlement, the prospects of which are faint, zero hour is fixed for the first fortnight in May.

It is clear that reports of alleged Polish intransigence which reach me from both sides render Danzig situation as seen from this post increasingly dangerous, and it also seems that a heavy responsibility rests on the Officer Commanding Polish troops in Danzig.

Repeated to Warsaw.

No. 206

Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 18, 10.30 p.m.)

No. 313 Telegraphic [C 5550/54/18]

BERLIN, April 18, 1939, 9.0 p.m.

My telegrams Nos. 310,¹ 307² and 295,³ third paragraph.

Belgian Ambassador informs me that at dinner last night State Secretary told him Germany, in return for Danzig and right to construct a corridor across the Corridor, offer[ed] guarantees for Polish-Danzig trade, for Polish Corridor and for Polish frontier, terms which in State Secretary's opinion were extremely moderate but that owing to British influence the Poles had refused to make any concession and that negotiations had broken down. State Secretary was accordingly very pessimistic and bitter against His Majesty's Government.

Soviet Ambassador was also informed by State Secretary this morning that no progress was being made in the negotiations for Danzig owing to Polish opposition.

Both Belgian and Swiss colleagues have told me on two separate occasions today that they learn on good authority that Herr von Ribbentrop is continuing to advise Herr Hitler that Great Britain would take no action to intervene on behalf of Poland.

I cannot vouch for exact details of German offer to Poland but in view of great importance of this matter do you consider it desirable for me to approach the State Secretary on the subject?

Repeated to Warsaw.

¹ No. 205.

² Not printed. This telegram reported a statement to Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes by a Polish journalist that up to March 31 there had been a good prospect of a settlement of the Danzig question, but that since M. Beck's visit to London no progress had been made in the negotiations, as the Poles were now determined not to give in.

³ No. 184.

No. 207

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 18, 10.52 p.m.)

No. 118 Telegraphic [C 5531/3356/18]

WARSAW, April 18, 1939, 9.6 p.m.

My telegram No. 114.¹

Minister for Foreign Affairs informs me he had satisfactory conversation with the Roumanian Minister for Foreign Affairs on April 17. It was agreed that while the treaty of alliance with its military conventions only envisaged Russia as aggressor nevertheless in the event of any signs of German or other aggression conversations should immediately take place with a view to considering what common action the two countries should take.

2. This subject would be further pursued after M. Gafencu's return from Berlin when he would have formed a better appreciation of German intentions. For the moment there did not appear to be any necessity for immediate decision.

3. Both Ministers for Foreign Affairs felt that for the moment Hungary's attitude was less aggressive though M. Gafencu appeared to be less optimistic on this point than M. Beck.

4. They were also agreed in thinking that it was undesirable to give any publicity to their present attitude in regard to Germany and therefore preferred to leave the matter open for the time being.

Repeated to Budapest, Bucharest, Berlin and Moscow.

¹ No. 187.

No. 208

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 19, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 117 Telegraphic [C 5547/54/18]

WARSAW, April 18, 1939, 9.15 p.m.

Your telegram No. 109.¹

Minister for Foreign Affairs has no confirmation of these rumours and on present information does not believe in the possibility of a German *coup* in Danzig this week. He understood for instance that there were no German warships in the Baltic at present which alone seemed to indicate that no dangerous movement was intended.

As regards negotiations on this question the last word had come from Poland. M. Beck had intimated that he desired to see the German Ambassador immediately on his return from Berlin which is not likely to take place until after Herr Hitler's birthday. On the last occasion that this matter was discussed at Berlin the Polish Ambassador had intimated that Poland was prepared to negotiate but would not accept any unilateral decision and would

¹ No. 197.

regard any internal move on the part of the Danzig Senate as very serious and any German military movement in their support as an act of aggression.

In all circumstances M. Beck did not feel that it was opportune for Poland to make any further movement for the moment. He preferred to await return of the German Ambassador before reverting to the subject.

Repeated to Berlin and Danzig.

No. 209

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw)

No. 111 Telegraphic [C 5322/15/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 18, 1939, 9.30 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 110.¹

2. Please inform Minister for Foreign Affairs that His Majesty's Government deeply appreciate his communication.

3. You may also tell him that we are considering the question of Staff conversations and that we hope to let him have an expression of our views before very long.

¹ No. 164.

No. 210

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)

No. 945 [C 5532/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 18, 1939*

Sir,

During the course of a conversation with the French Ambassador to-day, I asked M. Corbin whether the French Government had received any reply from the Soviet Government to their recent approach. His Excellency said that they had not. As we were aware, they had not entirely withdrawn their own proposals to the Soviet Government, but had associated themselves with those that we were putting forward and had understood that the Russian reply would probably take the shape of counter-proposals. I told him that we had received such a reply,¹ which I had only had time to glance at, but which seemed to be cast in the form of counter-proposals that he had anticipated. My first impression of these was that they were in very precise form and might not improbably cause some embarrassment in certain quarters, but we should, of course, let the French Government have them, as well as sending them as soon as may be our comments.

I am, &c.,

HALIFAX

¹ See No. 201.

No. 211

Viscount Halifax to Sir W. Seeds (Moscow)

No. 291 [N 1721/92/38]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 18, 1939*

Sir,

With reference to your telegram No. 49¹ of March 28 regarding the communiqué issued on the conclusion of the visit to Moscow of the Secretary to the Department of Overseas Trade, I have to inform Your Excellency that the Soviet Ambassador referred to this matter in conversation on March 29 with the Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, saying that the request for the deletion from the communiqué of all passages relating to political matters had caused a rather unfortunate impression in Moscow, particularly since Mr. Hudson had told him himself before his departure for Moscow, that he proposed to engage in political discussions, and in fact attributed considerable importance to these, and since I had also indicated to him that Mr. Hudson would have an opportunity for political discussions of some importance. Moreover, such discussions had in fact taken place and had been, he thought, of some value. It therefore came as a surprise and something of a shock to the Soviet Government to find His Majesty's Government, in such circumstances, suddenly asking for the deletion of all references to political matters from the communiqué.

2. Sir Alexander Cadogan explained to M. Maisky that my first intimation that there would be any reference to political matters in the communiqué was contained in the message from Mr. Hudson contained in your telegram under reference, which was received here in the afternoon of 27th March. I had not expected that the communiqué would deal with political matters and had seen no text of it; and as it was due for immediate issue there seemed no opportunity for discussing the text. The simplest procedure, therefore, would have been to omit all political passages; but when I saw the text of the communiqué, which had been issued before my message could be received or commented on, I found it, as he need hardly say, quite unexceptionable and could readily agree that no harm had been done by its issue. It was to be regretted if the incident had created an incorrect and unfortunate impression upon the Soviet Government; but he could be assured that this was, of course, the last thing which I had intended.

3. M. Maisky, as is his wont, accepted very grudgingly this explanation, which Your Excellency is at liberty to repeat in any quarter where you may have reason to think that misconception of my motives in this matter may still prevail.

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

¹ See Volume IV of this Series, No. 545.

No. 212

Viscount Halifax to Sir S. Waterlow (Athens)

No. 155 [R 2928/2613/67]

FOREIGN OFFICE, April 18, 1939

Sir,

The Greek Minister called at the Foreign Office on the 15th April with a message from the Greek Prime Minister instructing him to seek an interview with me at once and express to me General Metaxas's warmest thanks for the declarations made by the Prime Minister and myself in the Commons and Lords respectively.¹ He was to point out that the Royal Government of Greece and the Greek people appreciate most particularly the spontaneousness and the nobility of the gesture of Great Britain, which constitutes a new and precious testimony of the traditional friendship as well as of the interest she never ceased to manifest for Greece. The gesture, M. Simopoulos was to add, moved the Greeks deeply and strengthened even more the close ties which already existed between the two countries.

I am, &c.,

HALIFAX

¹ See Parl. Deb., 5th ser., H. of C., vol. 346, cols. 5-15; H. of L., vol. 112, cols. 603-13.

No. 213

Letter from Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Sir A. Cadogan

[C 5859/3356/18]

BRITISH EMBASSY, WARSAW, April 18, 1939

Dear Cadogan,

I am sorry to bother you with an aspect of the situation which may not seem as important in London as it does in Warsaw and I would not do so unless it had been borne in upon me almost daily and from many quarters.

It is the amount of apparently unnecessary publicity given through the French, British and American press and also through the B.B.C. to our discussions with the U.S.S.R. In suggesting that this is seriously damaging our chances in the very difficult hand we are trying to play, I am not thinking only of Polish or Roumanian susceptibilities nor am I taking the standpoint that the U.S.S.R. ought to be left out in the cold.

On the contrary I am convinced that the material help of the U.S.S.R. will be essential to the Eastern front. But to advertise each step—accompanied often by false or misleading rumours—seems to me to be playing the game of the Nazi extremists and increasing their power for evil over the mind of Hitler, in addition to arousing legitimate qualms in the countries of Eastern Europe. I know it is difficult for English journalists to understand the horror and hatred of Bolshevism that prevails among those countries which have suffered from it, got rid of it but are still next-door neighbours to it. I know that Hitler and Mussolini (though originally sincere in their anti-Comintern

crusade) have long used it as a bogey. I would only urge that in the critical position in which we are, we cannot afford to give a single point away to the enemy, and that by advertising daily our anxiety to rope in the U.S.S.R. we are handing him propaganda on a plate.

Would it not be possible even at this late hour for someone in authority to *insist* that the press and B.B.C. control themselves? The opposition are presumably now taken into the Government's confidence and ought to understand the point, which is not one of policy but of psychology.

Yours ever,

H. W. KENNARD

No. 214

*The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 19, 1.10 p.m.) .*

No. 362 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 3077/7/22]

ROME, April 19, 1939

Following for Secretary of State:

A lady of English birth in contact with prominent political circles here and entirely reliable told Counsellor yesterday evening that no one in Italy wanted to go to war with England. Italy would do her best to hold back Germany but required help. Counsellor enquired what kind of help as Italy seemed to be completely involved at present juncture. The lady replied that she agreed but allowance must be made for a mentality entirely different from our own. Signor Mussolini she said was probably very worried and longing for France to make some kind of gesture, asking if it was not too late even now. But the lady added that France is probably determined on war and will drag England into it feeling that she will never have a better opportunity. She thought that some direct action on our part with Signor Mussolini might be useful.

I think this is a fair representation of position as seen through Italian eyes. I myself believe that some gesture by France such as visit by French Ambassador to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to enquire what in fact were Italian demands might make a great difference.

Signor Mussolini believes he has been rebuffed by the French and as he has already informed Prime Minister he will not use his influence in favour of peace, i.e. to check Herr Hitler until French show their willingness to talk.¹

You will remember that he adopted a somewhat similar attitude at the time of the September crisis and it was not until his help was formally invoked by us that he consented to move.

I presume it is hardly possible for us to assure Signor Mussolini that we will do our best to induce the French to open conversations; if we felt able to do so the effect might be great as I feel the French attitude towards Italy may well be the key to the situation.

¹ See Volume IV of this Series, No. 596.

My Belgian colleague shares my view on this last point.
I am hoping to have a farewell interview with Signor Mussolini before I leave; time has not yet been fixed and it might even take place tomorrow.²

² A copy of this telegram was sent to Paris by the Foreign Office on April 19.

No. 215

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 20, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 146 Telegraphic [R 3040/661/67]

ANGORA, April 19, 1939, 8.4 p.m.

My telegram No. 138.¹

My French colleague told me on April 19 that he has received most pessimistic reports from Berlin as to the danger of early outbreak of war probably by attack by Germany on Poland. He added that he finds Secretary-General of Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs very pessimistic.

2. He has therefore telegraphed to Paris pointing out the extreme urgency of completing arrangements and indeed transporting whatever forces and material are necessary for co-operation with Turkey.

3. I am unable to check his information though I know from other colleagues that Secretary-General is very pessimistic.

4. Instructions foreshadowed in your telegram No. 123² have not yet reached me.

¹ No. 203.

² Not printed. See No. 203, note 2.

No. 216

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 20, 9.0 a.m.)

No. 120 Telegraphic [C 5569/54/18]

WARSAW, April 19, 1939, 8.10 p.m.

Your telegram No. 111.¹

Counsellor gave your message to M. Beck's Chef de Cabinet yesterday.

M. Lubienski stated that countries in respect of which Poland's reciprocal assurance applied were Holland, Denmark and Belgium.

He added that Polish Government were particularly anxious that arrangements for staff conversations should be kept secret.

¹ No. 209.

No. 217

Sir R. Hoare (Bucharest) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 20, 9.30 a.m.)
No. 133 Telegraphic [C 5735/15/18]

BUCHAREST, April 19, 1939, 9.15 p.m.

President of the Council who is acting Minister for Foreign Affairs,¹ told me very confidentially tonight that German Chargé d'Affaires under instructions from his Government had enquired whether Roumanian Government in any way prompted or had . . .² knowledge of President Roosevelt's message to German and Italian Governments³ and also whether Roumania felt herself threatened by Germany.

Answer of Roumanian Government to first two questions was in the negative. As regards third question Roumanian Government considered security of Europe was passing through critical phase, that they did not consider this country under direct menace from Germany and that German Government was in any case in a position to know whether any such menace existed.

President of the Council added that he understood that these questions had been addressed to practically all countries, of which Poland was not one, mentioned by the President of the United States and that he believed intention of this curious *démarche* was to try and obtain flatly negative replies to all three questions with the idea of making effective use of them in Herr Hitler's speech on April 28.

Repeated to Warsaw.

¹ i.e. during M. Gafencu's absence on his visits to European capitals.

² The text is here uncertain.

³ See No. 180.

No. 218

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 20, 9.30 a.m.)
No. 176 Telegraphic [C 5576/682/17]

PARIS, April 19, 1939, 9.30 p.m.

President of the Council summoned me this afternoon and spoke to me most earnestly in the following sense.

The immediate coming days before Herr Hitler's speech will be most important, perhaps crucial. We must show more and more that we mean business and that we are determined not to weaken in any way.

M. Daladier has ordered that one battleship, one cruiser, three destroyers and several submarines, over and above the ships already in the Mediterranean, shall proceed thither and cruise about roughly within the triangle Gibraltar, Tangier and Oran, calling at those ports from time to time. These vessels will be escorted as far as Lisbon by the big battleships Dunkirk and Strasbourg. This will make a good effect in Portugal where the atmosphere does not seem too good just now.

M. Daladier has also decided to call up another 150,000 men to the colours by the end of this week, mostly anti-aircraft defence men. This measure will be made public.

French Military Attaché at Berlin was asked by German Minister of War why there were so many men, tanks, etc., on the Eastern frontier when Germany had not taken similar measures there. The reply given was that Germany had massed men and material against Poland. Somewhat similar question to French Military Attaché in Rome elicited a somewhat similar reply.

President of the Council then urged that we on our part should do all we could to show such firmness and decision as alone could avert a conflict. Could we not send a part of the Home Fleet into the Mediterranean? But, and this was the crux of the whole situation, could we not at once adopt some form of national compulsory service? M. Daladier suggested that I must be tired of being pressed in this sense but he felt that he must ask me to send on his urgent and pressing appeal on this point to Your Lordship and the Prime Minister. This gesture should now be made. For a long time it might only be a gesture but it was a vital one for friends and foes alike. Its immediate adoption *very spontaneously* would, he felt convinced, prove a turning point and beginning of better days. Coming from the British Prime Minister who had fought so magnificently for peace, the effect would be tremendous. In early days a certain amount of French arms and equipment might well be supplied to us until we could ourselves produce necessary material.

This moving appeal made to me by the President of the Council only bears out what I have recently reported almost *ad nauseam*. I earnestly hope that His Majesty's Government will take it into immediate and most serious consideration. This is the moment when imponderables count more than mere material considerations. Moreover, as M. Mandel said the other day (see my telegram No. 215 Saving¹ April 14), German propaganda is terribly busy in France just now, and only by the speedy adoption of this measure can it be countered.

M. Daladier at one moment expressed the hope that Americans [?] would] perhaps send over some of the ships of their Atlantic Fleet to visit British and possibly French and other Mediterranean ports.

¹ Not printed.

No. 219

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora)

No. 126 Telegraphic [R 2889/661/67]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 19, 1939, 11.0 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 133.¹

1. I am most grateful for manner in which you are handling this delicate negotiation and for explanations contained in your telegrams Nos. 134² and 135.³

Not printed. See No. 190, note 1.

² No. 190.

³ No. 191.

2. You may tell Minister for Foreign Affairs that it has been a source of the greatest satisfaction to me to see that his general appreciation of the situation coincides with our own and that he realises that the interests of our two countries in the face of the common danger are identical. I note from paragraph 3 of Turkish communication⁴ quoted in your telegram No. 133 the definition of the role which the Turkish Government considers itself as best qualified to play, particularly with regard to the maintenance of Balkan solidarity as defined in paragraphs 2 and 3 of your telegram No. 121⁵ and paragraph 2 of your telegram No. 126;⁶ I presume, of course, that by Balkan solidarity His Excellency means the solidarity of the four States members of the Balkan Entente and Bulgaria. I cordially concur that the Turkish Government should continue along the path thus defined.

3. I also note from point 1 of the summary of the Turkish attitude set forth in the final paragraph of the same telegram that Turkey proposes declaring *publicly* that unless the Axis Powers commit an aggression in the Mediterranean or against the Balkans, Turkey will preserve her neutrality. I also gather from the last paragraph of your telegram No. 134, if I understand it aright, that the Turkish Government is prepared to give *secretly* [?] to] His Majesty's Government a valuable and far-reaching assurance of its co-operation in the event of war in the Balkans or the Mediterranean, even though that war resulted from an act of aggression committed elsewhere, or in the event of a general war.

4. While appreciating the value of the public declaration, I cannot help feeling that that value would be enhanced if it were possible that the declaration could be worded in a positive rather than in its present negative form, namely that if the Axis Powers committed an act of aggression in the Mediterranean or against the Balkans, Turkey would be unable to preserve her neutrality. But there is an even more important point. The literal effect of the words 'if the Axis Powers committed an act of aggression in the Mediterranean or against the Balkans' might be to enable Turkey to preserve her neutrality if, for example, German aggression against Belgium had led to a war in which Italy joined and which accordingly included the Mediterranean. In these circumstances Italy might not be technically regarded as an aggressor and accordingly the Turkish condition for the abandonment of neutrality would not technically be fulfilled. We are of course confident that this is not the Turkish intention, but the public declaration would be closely scrutinised and this obvious possibility pointed out. The Turkish Government may argue that this point would be covered by the proposed secret understanding, but I frankly do not like the idea of a secret understanding as well as a public declaration. Moreover, the Turkish Government may prefer to avoid the inconsistency which would arise from making a public declaration committing Turkey to preserving her neutrality unless the Axis Powers commit an aggression in the Mediterranean or against the Balkans while at

⁴ The paragraph numbers of the telegraphic summary correspond to those of the text printed as enclosure 2 in No. 199.

⁵ No. 62.

⁶ No. 63.

the same time entering into a secret understanding which commits her to co-operation with His Majesty's Government in certain other eventualities. In any case the procedure for a public declaration, which does not really show the nature of the agreement reached and has to be completed by a secret understanding, is difficult to reconcile with our Parliamentary system. I recognise however Turkey's desire to maintain a form of words which would confine her abandonment of her neutrality to the event of war in the Balkans or in the Mediterranean. It occurs to me therefore that a possible reconciliation of the two points of view could be reached by substituting for the words: 'an act of aggression in the Mediterranean or against the Balkans' the following: 'an act of aggression leading to war in the Mediterranean or in the Balkans'.

5. His Majesty's Government attach great importance to the position being made clear to their own public and it would greatly help them if the Turkish Government could see its way to adopt this phraseology in its declaration. In return for such a public declaration His Majesty's Government would be prepared to lend Turkey all the support in their power.

6. If this were agreed, the forms of agreement would have to be worked out on the lines of the two preceding paragraphs.

7. I will now deal with the method of procedure outlined in the six points at the end of your telegram No. 133.

Point 1. The question of eventual declarations on the part of both Governments has been covered in paragraphs 4 and 5 above. If in the meantime it becomes necessary to say anything in public, I would suggest that both Governments should confine themselves to statements that they are in close consultation with each other and that the discussions proceeding between them reveal the accustomed identity of views.

Point 2. Will involve staff conversations. His Majesty's Government will be prepared to start these at an early date, provided agreement is reached in principle on paragraphs 4 and 5 above. At the moment staff conversations are proceeding with French experts in London and I suggest that we should begin parallel conversations here as soon as possible with Turkish Service Attachés. Without associating the French with the conversations with the Turkish experts, it should be possible thus for His Majesty's Government to discuss without undue delay with the French experts, independently if thought desirable, any points arising from the Anglo-Turkish discussions which might depend on French co-operation.

Point 3. Since you have already acted on my telegram No. 118,⁷ Turkish Government is now aware of approach made to Moscow. Active exchange of views is proceeding as to best way in which Soviet assistance could be enlisted. You will also have seen Moscow telegram No. 69.⁸

Point 4. Turkish Government will already know from your communication to it of my telegram No. 111⁹ how ready I am to second its efforts and you may stress the importance which His Majesty's Government attach to securing Bulgarian co-operation. I look to Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs to

⁷ No. 171.

⁸ No. 201.

⁹ No. 162.

indicate how and when my intervention can be most useful. Roumanian Minister for Foreign Affairs will be in London from April 22 to 25 as at present arranged.

Point 5. Is covered by my suggestions on point 2.

Point 6. Every possible effort will be made to ensure secrecy. It will, however, be essential to take French Government into our confidence.

8. You should communicate without delay the proposals and considerations advanced in the preceding paragraphs to the Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Repeated to Sofia, Rome, Athens, Belgrade, Bucharest, Warsaw and Moscow.

No. 220

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)

No. 172 Telegraphic [C 5460/15/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 19, 1939, 12.0 midnight*

Moscow telegram No. 69.¹

1. Please inform French Government that we are considering latest Soviet proposal and that we would ask them not to send any reply to it without consulting us.

2. Have you any more detailed information about the French proposal than is given in your telegram No. 169?²

•Repeated to Moscow.

¹ No. 201.

² No. 183.

No. 221

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 21)

No. 37 Saving: Telegraphic [C 5675/54/18]

WARSAW, *April 19, 1939*

Berlin telegram No. 313.¹

Counsellor mentioned to M. Beck's Chef de Cabinet today these German reports of Polish intransigence over Danzig, without mentioning names of informants. M. Lubienski said this appeared to be typical German manoeuvre with a view to creating distrust between Poland and Great Britain concerning the effectiveness of guarantee so far as Danzig (admittedly a weak spot) was concerned. German propaganda was suggesting to British public opinion that Polish rights in Danzig were already mere shadows, which was by no means the case, and to Poland that Great Britain would never back her up over Danzig. He would not say exactly what concessions Poland could make, but said that claims advanced in German press, namely return to Reich of Danzig and an extra-territorial road across the Corridor, were inadmissible. It was, however, quite untrue to say that Poland was refusing to negotiate.

Repeated to Berlin.

¹ No. 206.

No. 222

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 21)
No. 38 Saving: Telegraphic [C 5676/3356/18]

WARSAW, April 19, 1939

The reasons hitherto advanced for Polish dislike of association with U.S.S.R. in guarantee Pact are, I think, appreciated in London.

There may however be another which the Polish Government would be diffident to mention. It is the fear that once the U.S.S.R. became a full member of a coalition with Great Britain and France, the value and importance of Poland might tend to diminish in our eyes.

Polish interests might be subordinated to those of the greater Power. That the U.S.S.R. would be inclined to treat Poland as a mere pawn is fairly evident from Moscow telegram No. 69.¹ Whatever the comparative value of Poland and the U.S.S.R. may be, I venture to submit that as Poland will be in the forefront of the battle, if the worst occurs, her susceptibilities should be borne in mind.

Repeated to Moscow.

¹ No. 201.

No. 223

Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 22).
No. 457 [C 5693/15/18]

BERLIN, April 19, 1939

My Lord,

During the past month senior officials in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs have shown decided reluctance both in their offices and on private occasions to discuss with me the grave questions of foreign affairs now at issue. I at first thought that this was due to disinclination to talk of such matters to a *Chargé d'Affaires*. But I find that several of my colleagues who are the substantive holders of their posts have had the same experience and even those more fortunate have found that the Ministry know little or nothing of intended action. The State Secretary is sad and mute. He is at present much embittered against Great Britain and recently told the Belgian Ambassador that '*les relations avec l'Angleterre ne sont plus vivantes*'. The Under-Secretary of State is rushed and busy with routine matters, and of the remaining seniors Prince Bismarck is the only one who shows a disposition to talk.

2. I had an interview with him on April 17. He alleged complete ignorance of Herr Hitler's future intentions or actions and added nothing to what I have already reported as the German view of the crisis. He said in short that Great Britain was working for the encirclement of Germany and that unless this ceased he could not see how war could be avoided. The more British responsible statesmen denied this intention, the less they were believed. Prince Bismarck indeed stressed the encirclement bogey more than the

Russian connection. Of this encirclement Great Britain was the instigator and, because of this, the profoundest feelings of enmity were being stirred in the breasts of ordinary people who were not necessarily National Socialists and normally never troubled their heads about foreign affairs. He could not understand how the Prime Minister and Cabinet had turned so violently against Germany. The Prime Minister's first statement in Parliament on hearing the news of the march into Czecho-Slovakia was, he said, comparatively moderate and understandable. But during the two days which elapsed before his second statement he had been got hold of by hostile and insidious elements.

3. Furthermore Great Britain had taken an unnecessarily grave step in withdrawing her Ambassador and in this connection he warned me that, if the question of his return were discussed in the press and on the public platform, the response of Germany would not be conciliatory and would regard the return of the Ambassador as a climb down on the part of Great Britain. Moreover unless it took place soon the German Government would adopt the attitude that it did not care whether there was a British Ambassador here or not. While he was careful the whole time to say he was speaking purely privately, he also gave the impression that Herr Hitler might not be in a hurry to send Herr von Dirksen back to London.

4. A further matter which rankled was the intended expulsion of Herr Karlowa, Herr Himmelmann and Frau Wolff (your despatch No. 675¹ of April 3) about whose cases Prince Bismarck alleged that Dr. Kordt had been given the most meagre information.

I have, &c.,

GEORGE OGILVIE-FORBES

¹ Not printed. The German Chargé d'Affaires in London was informed on April 3 that these three members of Nazi party organizations in Great Britain were being expelled from the country owing to their illegal activities.

No. 224

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 22)

No. 104 [C 5734/1110/55]

WARSAW, April 19, 1939

My Lord,

With reference to my despatch No. 83¹ of the 5th April, I have the honour to transmit herewith three memoranda by Colonel Sword, Military Attaché to the Embassy, regarding the naval plans of the Polish General Staff in the event of war with Germany, and also regarding the military defensibility of Poland's western frontier.

2. I am sending a copy of this despatch to His Majesty's Ambassador in Berlin.

I have, &c.,

H. W. KENNARD

¹ No. 12.

*Lieutenant-Colonel Sword to Sir H. Kennard**(M 162/P)*

WARSAW, April 15, 1939

His Excellency the Ambassador

I left Warsaw on Thursday, the 6th April, for a car tour of the south-western frontier by the following route: Piotrkow-Czestochowa-Lubliniec-Tarnowskie-Gory-Katowice-Zory-Moszczenica-Gotkowice-Bogumin-Orlowa-Frysztat-Cieszyn-Bielsko-Sucha-Chabowka-Czarny-Dunajec-Zakopane-Jaworzyna-Myslenice-Krakow-Kielce-Radom.

2. The main Katowice road is for the most part asphalt and in excellent condition. There are two diversions at Kamiensk and Rudniki, the latter of which avoids a bridge which will still take some months to complete.

3. Sixteen kilom. west of Czestochowa the country becomes noticeably closer, and woods extend along the German frontier from Lubliniec to Tarnowskie-Gory, where the landscape opens out and becomes more undulating.

The fixed defences covering the Katowice industrial area did not appear to have been augmented in any way. While they lack depth, it is believed that roads and approaches are mined where they are not covered by fire or anti-tank obstacles, and the ground floors of certain houses near the frontier are said to be prepared for defence. No doubt positions further in rear are reconnoitred for artillery and other arms; nevertheless, the Katowice industrial area remains highly vulnerable to German attack.

4. His Majesty's Vice-Consul at Katowice informed me that M. Grazynski¹ in a recent interview had expressed himself as highly satisfied with the recent improvement in relations between Poles and the German minority, who were now in subdued mood, while white stockings² had disappeared. Mr. Thwaites had investigated the stories of bloodshed in Bogumin, but had come to the conclusion that such incidents as had occurred concerned local and not Reich Germans. There appeared to be no foundation for stories of collisions with German troops from across the frontier—apart from the minor incident of the mechanised column which was turned back, which was admitted by the Polish General Staff.

5. Continuing my tour via Zory to Bogumin, I covered ground whose nature I have previously reported. Both here, and in fact throughout my tour, I was impressed by the absence of any sign of military activity, in marked contrast to the previous occasion when I had visited the Teschen area during the entry of Polish troops, which had been conspicuous along the old frontier.

6. Bogumin itself gives the impression of a small sleepy town, separated from Germany by the Oder River, which runs approximately north and south at this point. About 700 metres east of the river runs a double line of former Czech concrete anti-tank posts, barbed wire, and two large gun and machine-

¹ Voievode of Silesia.

² A nationalist symbol.

gun emplacements, covering the open space crossed by the approaches to Bogumin Junction. Here the main portion of the town is situated, lying some 3 kilom. south-east from the frontier and including the line network of the junction proper.

The value of the Czech defences of Bogumin has been further discounted by German penetration, via Moravska-Ostrava, and there is no doubt of the vulnerability of this important junction.

There were no signs of unrest in the neighbourhood, and such local inhabitants as were questioned admitted no recent disturbances.

7. The roads in the Trans-Olza area are now inferior to those on the Polish side of the former frontier. The Cieszyn-Bielsko road is now in excellent condition, but from here, via Zywiec, to where it joins the main Krakow road near Rabka, the road is water-bound and full of pot-holes. The Krakow-Chabowka road is now excellent, but there is a large bridge under construction at Chabowka which necessitates a detour to Zakopane, via Czarny-Dunajec, along a very bad stretch of road. The Zakopane-Jaworzyna road is good. The Jaworzyna Valley connects, via Zdiar, with Slovakia, but it flanks the virtually impassable barrier, as far as military operations are concerned, of the Tatra Mountains.

8. Returning to Warsaw, via Krakow, the outstanding feature of the journey is the remarkably bad stretch of road between Krakow and Kielce, though repairs here are to be put in hand this year. The Kielce-Warsaw road is now mainly in excellent condition, since the completion of the formerly bad stretch between Kielce and Radom.

9. The principal impression obtained from this tour was the noticeable absence of apparent military activity. Knowing as one does that the garrisons along this frontier have all been increased, the skill with which this fact is concealed from view is all the more remarkable.

E. R. SWORD

Lt.-Colonel, Military Attaché

ENCLOSURE 2 IN NO. 224

Lieutenant-Colonel Sword to Sir H. Kennard

(M 163/P)

His Excellency the Ambassador

WARSAW, April 16, 1939

Major Colbern, the American Military Attaché, returned yesterday from a car tour of the following general route: Lodz-Kalisz-Poznan-Bydgoszcz-Grudziadz-Torun-Kutno.

2. Even in garrison towns there were very few troops to be seen—less even than in normal times. Apart from occasional small groups of requisitioned horses and carts, there was nothing to indicate military activity in the western garrisons.

3. Major Colbern was impressed by the wooded and intersected nature of the country south-west of Poznan, in contrast to the rolling plains due west

of Poznan. He thought that German mechanised troops would have no easy task in advancing towards the Grudziadz-Torun-Bydgoszcz area, as the country here was difficult and more suited to the employment of infantry formations.

4. He noticed that German was much more freely spoken in the Poznan salient than five years ago, when he had spent two years at Grudziadz.

5. He believed that recent arrests of Germans in Poznania had been chiefly of trained agitators who had been imported to incite the Poles against the Germans, apparently under instructions from Germany.

6. In general, he thought that the main concentration of Polish troops was in the area Torun-Bydgoszcz-Poznan, but he admitted his inability to gauge the extent to which expansion had taken place.

7. He thought that a main German offensive would commence by cutting off the Polish Corridor, followed by the Upper Silesian industrial area and the Poznan salient. He doubted any initial attempt to advance from East Prussia, where the German garrison at present only consisted of three infantry divisions and one cavalry brigade. From personal acquaintance with the southern frontier, he believed that the easiest northerly approaches through the Central Carpathians lay between approximately Lupkow and Muszyna, which gave direct access to the central industrial district.

8. Major Colbern's views regarding the country he traversed coincide with my own. There is no doubt that the difficult wooded nature of much of the country on Poland's western frontier provides ample scope for delaying tactics, of which the Polish army with its tenacious and mobile cavalry and infantry might be expected to make full use. While the degree of resistance which the Polish army could oppose to a large-scale German offensive on her western frontier can only be expected to be limited in view of the widely different standards of armament and equipment, and the dissipation of force rendered necessary by the partial encirclement of Poland by Germany, this does not imply that such resistance would not be stubborn, and indeed probably formidable in the more difficult areas where artillery observation is difficult and the movement of armoured fighting vehicles restricted.

E. R. SWORD

Lt.-Colonel, Military Attaché

ENCLOSURE 3 IN No. 224

Lieutenant-Colonel Sword to Sir H. Kennard

(M 165/P)

His Excellency the Ambassador

WARSAW, April 17, 1939

Commandant Gruillot, the French Naval Attaché, informed me yesterday of the Polish Naval Staff's stated intention to fight, should they be involved in a war with Germany. It would be dishonourable, they said, to do nothing with a fleet, however small, on which they had after all spent a considerable sum. Commandant Gruillot believed that they would, in fact, fight.

2. Commandant Gruillot estimated the effective strength of the Polish fleet at four destroyers, four submarines, and minelayers. The rest of the fleet was obsolete and might be ignored.

3. Initial operations in a war with Germany depended entirely on German intentions regarding Gdynia and Hel Peninsula. Any German attack on Gdynia was bound to succeed in a very short time, but Hel Peninsula was easy to defend by land owing to the narrowness of the peninsula, and the last war had shown the difficulty of overcoming land resistance by naval gunfire. The artillery defences of Hel would, however, be unable to prevent German ships standing off some 20,000 yards, though the accuracy of naval fire on land targets at that range was problematical. In any case, Commandant Gruillot thought that Hel might be able to hold out for a short time. (I feel, however, that one cannot count on Hel in a war with Germany.)

4. He assumed that the Polish destroyers would not last more than a few days against the German fleet, but the submarines had a cruising range of five weeks without refuelling, and might be able to do damage in that time particularly against German traffic with East Prussia. If at the end of five weeks they had to refuel in a neutral port, they might welcome the use of Kronstadt. However, Commandant Gruillot thought that the question of Soviet assistance to Poland was so delicate that no suggestion to the Poles that Soviet naval aid might be forthcoming was advisable until the Poles were in comparatively desperate straits as regards the refuelling of their submarines, when they might be prepared to suggest the use of Kronstadt of their own accord.

5. The strength of the Soviet fleet in the Baltic was, however, a factor to reckon with. While numbers in the area were difficult to estimate owing to employment of the White Sea Canal, it amounted to a total of some seventy submarines, which alone, apart from the remainder of the Soviet fleet based on Kronstadt, might be effectively employed against the Germans.

6. As regards the use of other neutral ports by the Poles, Commandant Gruillot doubted whether Tallinn would be available, owing to Estonian fear of German reactions. He was more optimistic regarding Sweden, in view of the strong anti-German body of opinion in that country.

7. As regards German naval policy in general, Commandant Gruillot referred to a German tendency to reverse the policy of the last war, whereby German naval strength was mainly retained in home waters. He thought that the spring exercises now being carried out by the Germans might be an instance of this new policy of the heavier ships venturing further afield, which might result in German control of the Baltic Sea being correspondingly reduced.

E. R. SWORD
Lt.-Colonel, Military Attaché

No. 225

Letter from Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Sir O. Sargent
[C 5803/15/18]

BRITISH EMBASSY, PARIS, April 19, 1939

My dear Sargent,

Léger told Campbell last evening that he thought that the one chance of securing a moderate German answer to Mr. Roosevelt's message was that His Majesty's Government and the French Government should continue at full speed their measures to organise a front against aggression, and hasten their own defence measures. If before the 28th April our negotiations with Roumania, Russia and Poland could be concluded, and conscription, even if only in principle, had been adopted in the United Kingdom, he would answer for it that Herr Hitler's reply would be moderate.

Léger agreed with Campbell that a moderate reply would have the effect of postponing the issue rather than solving it. He said that Germany would no doubt make great efforts, after as well as before April 28, to demoralise public opinion in France and the United Kingdom by holding out specious hopes of peace and adopting a specious attitude of reasonableness. It was therefore essential that even after a moderate answer France and Great Britain should not relax to the slightest degree their defence measures and their diplomatic activity, until they felt really as strong as the Axis Powers. At worst a moderate reply by Herr Hitler would give us more time to get ready for an attack, and at best the delay might result in his being convinced that we were too strong to attack. Léger added that the French Chargé d'Affaires at Berlin had telegraphed that there was talk of the German reply differentiating between the United States people and Mr. Roosevelt, with whom it would be said Germany could not deal. Léger hoped that it would do so! Bullitt, whom he had told of this report, hoped so, too.

Yours ever,

ERIC PHIPPS

No. 226

The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 20, 9.30 a.m.)
No. 369 Telegraphic [R 3038/7/22]

ROME, April 20, 1939, 1.15 a.m.

Director-General of European and Mediterranean Section of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs who is notoriously reticent spoke with unusual freedom today¹ to the First Secretary² who called to take leave of him.

Signor Buti said that while he did not believe war was inevitable it was 'closer today than it was yesterday'. General distrust which existed was

¹ This telegram was drafted on April 19.

² Mr. Yencken.

obviously dangerous and might become more so and there seemed to be a great deal of misunderstanding everywhere. Present situation he thought was expressive of mistakes and misunderstandings in the past and its roots went back to the last war and the way Italy had been treated after it. He would not say the English had been generous but they had in the end paid up over 1915 Treaty of London, while the French he declared had done nothing.³ In the 1935 Agreement Italy gave up a great deal in Tunis and in return got some strips of sand. She had expected something else but had not got it. Now the sand alone was not sufficient. The fundamental trouble now was, however, not so much what France had failed to give, as the general attitude of Frenchmen towards Italians for whom they showed no respect or regard. Failure of French to pay up under the London Treaty of 1915 was simply outward and visible and public expression of the disregard Frenchmen felt for the Italians. Italians felt it as a sort of stigma and though this might seem unimportant it was in fact very serious indeed. Until something was done to remove it there was no hope of eliminating the bitterness from Franco-Italian relations. The English were different and the British navy especially were always careful to show respect for the Italian navy but the French were impossible and the danger in the present situation was that Italians were beginning to feel that the relations with France were hopeless.

In saying this Signor Buti spoke with a great deal of earnestness and seriousness and was more moved than his hearer had ever seen him.

Repeated to Paris.

³ For the question of Italy's claim to colonial compensation under the Treaty of London see Volume IV in Series I of this Collection, No. 17, note 7. The Treaty is printed as Cmd. 671 of 1920.

No. 227

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 20, 11.50 a.m.)
No. 178 Telegraphic [C 5610/15/18]

PARIS, April 20, 1939, 10.35 a.m.

My telegram No. 176.¹

I dined last night with United States Ambassador and told him of M. Daladier's suggestion regarding American Atlantic Fleet.²

Mr. Bullitt said it would not be possible to send it to Europe now. What the President had done in regard to Pacific Fleet³ was a very bold step and must be considered sufficient for the present. Further steps might however be taken (I gathered of a different nature) before Hitler's speech.

Mr. Bullitt then said he wished to speak to me quite privately and as a real friend. He said the President felt very strongly that it was absolutely essential

¹ No. 218.

² i.e. M. Daladier's suggestion that ships of the U.S. Atlantic fleet might visit European ports.

³ It was announced on April 16 that the U.S. fleet would be moved from the Atlantic to its 'normal operating areas' in the Pacific.

for us to introduce compulsory national service at once and before April 28. The President could not understand how we could hesitate, when this step might still save peace. It was a matter President Roosevelt felt very bitterly about, but he could not of course suggest it officially to His Majesty's Government.

Mr. Bullitt then warned me solemnly of the intensive German propaganda that is now being carried on in France and elsewhere to show that we do not mean business and that we mean to give away anything that does not actually belong to us.

No. 228

The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 20, 3.20 p.m.)
No. 375 Telegraphic [R 3078/7/22]

ROME, April 20, 1939, 2.0 p.m.

Following for Secretary of State:

My telegram No. 362.¹

My French colleague whom I saw this morning completely agrees with me that relations between France and Italy are probably the key to the situation. He has been continuously urging French Government to allow him to open conversations here but he receives no reply to his requests. He repeats that M. Bonnet is already convinced, but that he hardly counts today and that opposition coming from M. Daladier and M. Léger is very strong. M. Daladier, who my colleague says is very obstinate, is frightened of the effect on Left and extreme Right opinion in France. Ambassador expressed a strong hope that we might be able to use our influence with M. Daladier even at the risk of receiving a somewhat unpleasant reply. My colleague and I both feel that although we cannot in any way guarantee success of such a step, if it did succeed as we ourselves think likely, the general effect would be very great.

¹ No. 214.

No. 229

Viscount Halifax to His Majesty's Representatives at Brussels, Copenhagen, Helsingfors, Athens, Riga, The Hague, Oslo, Stockholm, Berne, Angora, Belgrade, Bucharest.

No. 19¹ Telegraphic [C 5631/15/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, April 20, 1939, 6.0 p.m.

1. There is evidence that German Government are trying to extort from certain smaller countries assurance that they do not feel threatened by

¹ No. 19 to Brussels, No. 16 to Copenhagen, No. 18 to Helsingfors, No. 136 to Athens, No. 6 to Riga, No. 21 to The Hague, No. 5 to Oslo, No. 24 to Stockholm, No. 16 to Berne, No. 127 to Angora, No. 109 to Belgrade, No. 140 to Bucharest.

Germany. These assurances would then be used in the Reichstag speech to answer Mr. Roosevelt's message.²

2. We should like, if possible, to anticipate this move in some appropriate way in B.B.C. German broadcasts. It would be useful if you could telegraph as soon as possible useful public statements or press comments expressing apprehension in regard to the intentions of Germany or Italy or tending to expose anticipated German manœuvre.

² See No. 180.

No. 230

Mr. Snow (Helsingfors) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 20, 6.50 p.m.)

No. 31 Telegraphic [C 5689/15/18]

HELSINGFORS, April 20, 1939, 6.40 p.m.

Minister for Foreign Affairs informed me yesterday that the German Minister had called on him after publication of recent message of President of United States¹ to German and Italian Dictators and had put following two questions.

1. Had there been any prior consultation between the United States and Finland? Minister for Foreign Affairs replied 'of course not'. 2. Did Finland fear attack from Germany? Minister for Foreign Affairs replied that it did not. He added that delay of Germany in replying to State Department's proposals was however being interpreted abroad as showing that Germany had aggressive intentions there. My German colleague made light of this suggestion. I understand however that yesterday he despatched Counsellor of the Legation (see my despatch No. 79²) on further visit to Berlin.

Repeated to Stockholm.

¹ See No. 180.

² Not printed.

No. 231

Mr. Snow (Helsingfors) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 20, 6.50 p.m.)

No. 29 Telegraphic [N 2056/1974/38]

HELSINGFORS, April 20, 1939, 6.53 p.m.

Soviet wireless was reported in press yesterday to have been broadcasting for two days past offers of Soviet help against aggression to all States, particularly neighbouring States.

Minister for Foreign Affairs drew my attention to these reports and said that they would resent offer of Soviet help and would reject it if officially presented. He added that the Finns considered Soviet Russia was more in need of help than the Finns were and that they did not consider Soviet Russia was in a position to give effective help to anybody.

Repeated to Moscow.

No. 232

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)
No. 175 Telegraphic [C 5460/15/18]

My telegram No. 172.¹

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 20, 1939, 8.0 p.m.*

We should be glad to be informed of the views of the French Government at their earliest convenience.² Meanwhile it is most important that neither the terms of the Soviet proposal nor the reactions of His Majesty's Government or the French Government to it should be made public.

Repeated to Moscow.

¹ No. 220.

² Sir E. Phipps replied, in Paris telegram No. 182, on April 20 by referring to his letter of April 20 to Sir O. Sargent (No. 241).

No. 233

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw)
No. 113 Telegraphic [C 5697/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 20, 1939, 9.30 p.m.*

1. The Polish Ambassador enquired this morning whether he could be given any indication of the progress of the negotiations with the Soviet Government.

2. He was told that nothing definite could be said at the moment. His Majesty's Government had made certain suggestions to the Soviet Government designed to assure the retention of their sympathy and goodwill, and to obtain, if possible, some assurance that in the event of hostilities she might be able to assist in any manner that might prove convenient and acceptable to other Governments.

3. The Soviet Government had now made certain counter-proposals involving the disadvantage, always present to the mind of the Polish Government and to ourselves, that they would associate the Soviet rather too closely and too openly with the French and British Governments. These counter-proposals were under consideration and the reply to them had not been determined.

Repeated to Bucharest, Angora, Moscow and Paris.

No. 234

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw)
No. 114 Telegraphic [C 5696/54/18]

My telegram No. 109.¹

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 20, 1939, 9.50 p.m.*

1. The Polish Ambassador said this morning that he had gained the impression from several sources that the Anglo-Polish Arrangement had had a conciliatory effect in Berlin.

¹ No. 197.

2. Opportunity was taken to ask the Ambassador whether he knew anything of negotiations about Danzig. He replied in the negative, and did not believe that any negotiations were being actively pursued. He was sure that with any goodwill on German side, agreement should not be too difficult to reach. It would be intolerable if the Germans insisted on the incorporation of Danzig into the Reich, but short of that there should be good possibility of an agreement which, while assuring Polish rights, would give reasonable satisfaction to Germans in Danzig.

3. The Ambassador was told that we had heard of complaints that Anglo-Polish Arrangement had resulted in a stiffening of Polish attitude over Danzig. This was an obvious German complaint in which there was probably no truth. On the contrary, we supposed that it would be easier for M. Beck to negotiate from strength and possibly to find reasonable concessions that would be acceptable to his country.

4. The Ambassador was convinced that M. Beck desired a reasonable settlement, and would do his best to obtain one.

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

No. 235

Viscount Halifax to the Earl of Perth (Rome)

No. 213 Telegraphic [R 3077/7/22]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 20, 1939, 10.0 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 362.¹

You will see from my telegram No. 176 to Paris² that I have instructed His Majesty's Ambassador to do his utmost to induce the French Government to re-establish contact with the Italian Government. Meanwhile, when you see Signor Mussolini, you should speak to him on the following lines.

2. In the present time of crisis in world affairs His Majesty's Government are as determined as ever to do everything in their power to maintain peace and to seek a satisfactory settlement of difficulties without resort to war. They recognise that there are problems, some of them very difficult, that require to be solved but they are convinced that it is possible to find a solution of these problems by peaceful negotiations without resort to a world war which could not but be disastrous not only for those Powers directly involved but also for humanity in general.

3. His Majesty's Government have publicly declared their intention to resist aggression in certain specified cases, but this does not mean that they have any desire to encircle or threaten Italy or Germany. His Majesty's Government have not themselves any aggressive designs against any other Power, nor would they permit themselves to be made parties to any act of aggression by others. From their close association with the French Government His Majesty's Government feel able to assure Signor Mussolini that this is equally the policy of France.

¹ No. 214.

² No. 238.

4. Should Signor Mussolini himself raise the question of Italian claims against France you should reply that naturally this is a question to be settled between the two parties concerned; but that we for our part should be only too glad to see a just settlement of the questions at issue between the two countries. Had he any suggestions to make to achieve this end? You should unless you see serious objection add that Italy's action in Albania has inevitably made it far more difficult for France to take the initiative. Moreover, it is Italy who declares that she has unsatisfied claims: in spite of what Signor Mussolini has said, we ourselves at least are not clear as to what exactly it is that she asks. It is surely for her to take the first step by formulating her claims. If this were done with moderation, and direct and privately to the French Government, I cannot help thinking—though I have no right to speak on their behalf—that the French Government would take them into serious consideration. The result could not but lead to a diminution of the present tension, which would surely be in the interest of Italy no less than of the rest of the world.

5. You will see from my telegram No. 176 to Paris that we are suggesting to the French Government to make some move. But you need not inform Italian Government of this. That might only encourage them to do nothing pending result of my *démarche* in Paris.

Repeated to Paris.

No. 236

*Sir R. Clive (Brussels) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 21, 9.30 a.m.)
No. 21 Telegraphic [C 5681/15/18]*

BRUSSELS, April 20, 1939, 10.25 p.m.

Having learnt from a colleague that German Ambassador had called on Minister for Foreign Affairs in connexion with President Roosevelt's telegram to the Dictators, I asked Chef de Cabinet if this was true.

He said French Ambassador [*sic*]¹ had asked Minister for Foreign Affairs on April 17:

- (1) Whether Belgium feared an attack from Germany.
- (2) Whether she had prior knowledge of telegram.

Minister for Foreign Affairs replied 'No' to both questions.

Chef de Cabinet told me the same questions had been asked at The Hague, Oslo, Stockholm, Copenhagen, Luxemburg and possibly in other countries.

Minister for Foreign Affairs presumed that Herr Hitler would make use of the replies he received on April 28.

German Ambassador had also asked why Belgium had taken military measures. He was told that this was an obvious precaution in view of the international tension. The same reply, I was told, was given at The Hague. Chef de Cabinet requested that the above information be regarded as confidential.

¹ The word 'French' is obviously a mistake for 'German'.

No. 237

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw)

No. 115 Telegraphic [C 5547/54/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 20, 1939, 10.30 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 117.¹

1. You will now have seen Berlin telegrams, Nos. 310² and 313³ which show that although there may be no outbreak at Danzig within the next few days, the position is full of dangerous possibilities.

2. As His Majesty's Government have now given a guarantee to Poland, it is natural that we should keep an anxious eye upon the situation. I fully appreciate M. Beck's attitude, as he was good enough to explain it to me in London. As I understand it, he has no desire to close the door to reasonable and free negotiations but he is not prepared to discuss under threat or to accept any imposed solution.

3. The guarantee which the Polish Government have received from His Majesty's Government should strengthen his negotiating position, and I sincerely hope this will help him in his efforts to reach a satisfactory solution. At the same time I am anxious—as I am sure M. Beck himself is—that the situation at Danzig should not be allowed to deteriorate or get out of hand, or that German Government should be afforded ground for complaining that His Majesty's Government by support of Poland are rendering reasonable settlement more difficult.

4. I gather from your telegram under reference that M. Beck took your approach in good part, and indeed I think that the obligation we have assumed towards Poland entitles us to ask him to keep us informed of developments and to express to him our anxiety that a satisfactory solution may be peacefully achieved.

5. I shall be glad if you will, on the first occasion that you can suitably employ, and in such terms as you think best, make sure that our preoccupations are present to M. Beck's mind.

Repeated to Berlin.

¹ No. 208.

² No. 205.

³ No. 206.

No. 238

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)

No. 176 Telegraphic [R 3077/7/22]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 20, 1939, 10.30 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 173.¹

You will see from Rome telegram No. 362² (a copy of which should have reached you by bag today) that Lord Perth shares the view that there may still be time for us to strengthen Signor Mussolini's hand in restraining Herr Hitler from action which might precipitate a European war, if Signor Mussolini really is prepared to exercise a restraining influence in Berlin. It

¹ No. 194.

No. 214.

seems however that this will only be possible if the French and Italians can be brought into contact.

2. In my telegram No. 119 Saving³ I instructed you to approach the French with this object in view. In consequence of Italy's wanton attack on Albania you decided quite rightly not to act on these instructions (see your telegram No. 152⁴). In view, however, of Rome telegram under reference and of the remarks of M. Bonnet reported in your telegram No. 173, I feel that, despite the obvious and great difficulties, it would be worth making a fresh effort to bring together two parties who in substance may not perhaps prove to be very far divided.

3. You should remind M. Bonnet of his remarks reported in your telegram No. 173 and you should (? then)⁵ give him the substance of Rome telegram No. 362 and go on to say that from other information that has reached us there is some reason to believe that the Italians genuinely fear that they may become involved in war with France as the result of some incident for which Italy was not directly responsible.

4. We cannot, of course, trust to Signor Mussolini (particularly after his action in Albania) being on the side of moderation; but there are one or two encouraging signs. Signor Mussolini has given us a direct pledge that Italian troops will be withdrawn from Spain after the victory march through Madrid. It is true that the date of this parade has been postponed from May 2; but there are reports in the press today of the return to Italy of 2,000 troops from Spain which may conceivably be meant to be a proof of Italy's good intentions. In another connexion, M. Bonnet will of course have noticed that Count Ciano's speech justifying Italy's attack on Albania was phrased in unprovocative language. We also have evidence from various sources that the Italian Government sincerely attach importance to the continued existence of the Anglo-Italian Agreement, however peculiar their ideas of observing its terms may be.

5. In these circumstances and in view of the dangers of the present situation, we feel that it would be worth taking some risk in the hope of stimulating Signor Mussolini to restrain Herr Hitler from mad adventure. We entirely appreciate that it would in any case have been extremely difficult for the French to re-establish contact with Italy and that this has been made far more difficult by Italy's attack on Albania. Nor do we wish to suggest that the French should make concessions which they regard as dangerous on the chance that Signor Mussolini will thereby be dissuaded from joining in an attack on France. We gather, however, from M. Bonnet's remarks that there are certain concessions which the French would, if Italian Government was willing to engage in reasonable negotiation, be prepared to make and we feel strongly that in present circumstances an effort ought to be made to draw the Italians into conversations. We have Count Ciano's assurance on April 4 (see Rome telegram No. 265⁶)—for what it is worth—that Italy would not refuse discussions.

³ No. 79.

⁵ The text is here uncertain.

⁴ No. 85.

⁶ No. 73.

6. You should urge these and any other considerations that may occur to you on the French Government and do your utmost to induce them to re-establish contact with the Italians; and you may, if you think it desirable, speak to M. Daladier on these lines. You should of course make it clear beyond any doubt that we do not suggest that the French should make concessions which they believe to be dangerous and that we will give them our entire support in resisting any unreasonable claims that Italy may put forward. But we consider it essential to re-establish contact between the two Governments with the least possible delay and without waiting for the withdrawal of Italian troops from Spain.

7. You will see from my telegram No. 213 to Rome⁷ that I am instructing His Majesty's Ambassador to urge that the Italian Government should make a first advance direct and privately to the French Government. But you need not inform the French Government of this: it might only encourage them to do nothing pending the result of my *démarche* in Rome.

Repeated to Rome.

⁷ No. 235.

No. 239

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax

(Received April 21, 3.0 a.m.)

No. 147 Telegraphic [R 3073/661/67]

ANGORA, April 20, 1939, 11.13 p.m.

Your telegram No. 126.¹

I handed to Minister for Foreign Affairs on April 20 a personal letter containing full substance of your telegram. He promised immediate consideration.

He raised following points.

1. He agreed of course as to necessity of keeping French Government informed and said it was equally necessary for (? that he)² should take Soviet Government into his confidence. He had already done so to a certain extent and Soviet Government had equally informed him of their conversations with us. He added that Soviet Government have suggested an early meeting with Turkish Government to discuss international situation and that such a meeting will definitely take place at Batoum within next ten days. I said I must at once obtain your instructions as to whether you agreed to Soviet Government being informed.

2. He suggested that your telegram did not answer Turkish point about Straits. I said this was evidently covered by suggestion for Staff conversations. He admitted this but urged on me the importance which Turkey attached to certainty of material assistance from His Majesty's Government in regard to defence of Straits particularly on land. He said it was essential

¹ No. 219.

² The text is here uncertain.

that we should afford this assistance and I understood him to refer to supply of necessary guns, etc.

Repeated to Paris, Warsaw, Bucharest, Athens, Sofia, Belgrade, Rome and Moscow.

No. 240

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)

No. 981 [C 5692/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 20, 1939*

Sir,

In an interview with Sir A. Cadogan this morning the French Ambassador referred to a conversation which he had last night¹ with His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs on the subject of the latest Soviet proposals.

2. The Ambassador was told that there had been a preliminary discussion of this yesterday evening and that as a result His Majesty's Government would try to formulate the lines of the reply which they would eventually return to the Soviet Government. It had, however, at the same time been agreed that it would be necessary to inform the French Government of this proposed reply, and it was hoped that the French Government would not send their answer before there had been an opportunity of consulting with them. Your Excellency had in fact been instructed last night to put this to the French Government.

3. M. Corbin, to whom I² outlined our misgivings in regard to these proposals, said that the difficulties which their acceptance would create were plain enough. On the other hand, great care would have to be taken in handling the matter; a flat rejection would enable the Russians to cause both Governments considerable embarrassment, and it would be better if some practical counter-proposals could be devised.

I am, &c.,

HALIFAX

¹ The reference appears to be to the conversation between Lord Halifax and M. Corbin on April 18. See No. 210.

² In a subsequent despatch of April 24 the text was corrected at this point to read 'Sir A. Cadogan'.

No. 241

Letter from Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Sir O. Sargent

[C 5694/3356/18]

BRITISH EMBASSY, PARIS, *April 20, 1939*

My dear Sargent,

Foreign Office telegram No. 172¹ of April 19.

Campbell spoke to Léger about the negotiations with Russia this morning.

¹ No. 220.

1. Léger said emphatically that the French Government would not reply to the latest Soviet proposal² without first consulting us.

2. On the nature of the French proposal to the Soviet Government referred to in my telegram No. 169³ of April 15, he said that:

- (a) it was not really an annex to the Franco-Soviet Pact which had been suggested;
- (b) France had proposed that if she went to the help of Roumania against Germany, Russia should also lend her help. So far as Campbell could make out, such help should be more in the nature of assistance to France to help Roumania than help to Roumania directly;
- (c) there was a further French proposal that if, as a result of France helping Roumania, Germany should make France the object of her attack, then Russia should go to the help of France;
- (d) the exact nature of the help was not mentioned, but was to be for later discussion once the principle had been accepted;
- (e) the proposal was for an *ad hoc* agreement designed to meet the present circumstances and contemplating only Germany as the possible aggressor, who might bring the promise of help into play;
- (f) the French idea was to make a similar arrangement with regard to assisting Poland in case of aggression;
- (g) Great Britain was to be included in the arrangement on similar lines;
- (h) Campbell gathered that the French proposal contemplated an undertaking on the part of France (and Great Britain) to assist Russia if, as a result of her help in the case of German aggression on Roumania (and/or Poland), Russia herself was the object of German aggression.

3. With regard to the Russian answer, Léger said that it was quite different from what M. Bonnet had at first taken it to be. (M. Bonnet had at first thought that it coincided with the French views.) Unlike the French proposal, which proceeded from the general to the particular, the Russian suggestion proceeded from the particular to the general and wished to bind Great Britain and France not to a limited undertaking in clearly defined circumstances, but to a very general undertaking for a period of years in circumstances not so well defined. It was to be noticed that, while apparently under paragraph 1 of the Russian proposal Russia would be helped by France and England in case of aggression, under paragraph 4 it might be that Great Britain would not assist Poland in the case of attack by countries other than Germany.

The French Government had not completed their study of the Russian reply but Léger felt that that reply, although objectionable on several grounds in its present state, could, if stripped of certain obvious objections, be made the basis of an arrangement with Russia. He felt that once France and Great Britain made certain requests of Russia they must be prepared to grant the requests for reciprocity in some form which Russia very naturally would make to them. He considered that if Great Britain and France granted the essentials

² See No. 201.

³ No. 183.

of reciprocity Russia could be made to drop objectionable non-essentials. The agreement should be as simple as possible. It might be possible to meet certain Russian *desiderata* in the form of 'gentlemen's agreements' connected with the treaty but not forming part of it. He doubted whether it would be possible for Great Britain and France to accept the inclusion in the agreement of an undertaking to assist all the States of Eastern Europe between the Baltic and the Black Sea and the border of the U.S.S.R.

As on April 18, Léger strongly emphasised the importance of getting as many of our negotiations as possible successfully concluded before the 28th April: in particular it was of the highest importance to secure that Poland should conclude an arrangement with Roumania by that date. We should not be under any illusion as to Colonel Beck's wish if possible to deflect the German danger to the south of Poland, i.e. on to Roumania. He also again urged the importance of the adoption of conscription by His Majesty's Government, before April 28. It was only this which would convince the Germans; but there was another aspect, that of the very strong and insidious propaganda being made by the Germans and Italians in France based on our failure to adopt compulsory national service, arguing that we expected them to do our fighting for us.

Yours ever,

ERIC PHIPPS

P.S. I enclose a copy of the formula proposed by the French which Bonnet has since sent me.

E. P.

ENCLOSURE IN NO. 241

Copy of formula proposed by the French Government

'Au cas où la France se trouverait en état de guerre avec l'Allemagne, par suite de l'assistance qu'elle porterait à la Pologne ou à la Roumanie, l'U.R.S.S. lui prêterait immédiatement aide et assistance.

Au cas où l'U.R.S.S. se trouverait en état de guerre avec l'Allemagne, par suite de l'assistance qu'elle porterait à la Pologne ou à la Roumanie, la France lui prêterait immédiatement aide et assistance.

Les deux Gouvernements se concerteront sans délai sur les modalités de cette assistance et prendront toutes dispositions pour leur assurer sa pleine efficacité.'

No. 242

The Earl of Perth (Rome) to Viscount Halifax

(Received April 21, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 384 Telegraphic [R 3161/7/22]

Your telegram No. 213.¹

ROME, April 21, 1939, 12.45 a.m.

I went to say goodbye to Signor Mussolini. I found him most cordial, friendly and in his best vein.

¹ No. 235.

It had been arranged that Count Ciano should meet me beforehand as he had told me that he wished to come with me. He was, however, a little late and I saw Signor Mussolini alone at first. After some remarks of a personal character he asked me if I had read his speech of yesterday.² I replied that I had. He stated that what he had then said represented his genuine views. He was really anxious for peace. There were however certain questions which required settlement round a table. He did not believe in a huge conference such as that suggested by President Roosevelt. The questions he had in mind were Polish-German relations particularly as regards Danzig and Italo-French relations especially concerning Italian claims on France which were mainly juridical and administrative; he referred in particular to the status of Italians in Tunis.

This gave me an opportunity of saying that my Government felt that questions between France and Italy were ones which should be solved between two parties concerned but we should be delighted if settlement of them could be found. I enquired whether Mussolini had any suggestions to this end. It was Italy that had these unsatisfied claims. In private life if anyone told me they had unsatisfied claims against me I should wait until they were formulated. Signor Mussolini replied that French knew quite well what the Italian claims were. On my showing some astonishment he stated that in February M. Baudouin had come to Rome³ and had stated to a business associate that he had an important communication to make to Italian Government. He was seen by Count Ciano and he told the latter that he had had a talk with M. Bonnet in Paris who had taken him to see M. Daladier. As a result of this interview instructions had been given him to make a communication to the Italian Government setting out what France was prepared to offer; apparently this communication went into considerable detail. It was embodied by M. Baudouin in a memorandum. After examining it and taking Signor Mussolini's instructions, Count Ciano, on seeing M. Baudouin a second time, had replied that Italian Government accepted the French proposals as a basis of negotiation. They stipulated, however, negotiations should take place through ordinary diplomatic channel, namely through M. François-Poncet.

There had been further conversations between M. Baudouin and his Italian business associates in Paris (Count Ciano promised to supply me later with exact date) but since that time Italian Government had heard nothing more of any kind. Signor Mussolini had therefore come to the conclusion that the action and intentions of French Government could not be regarded as serious. So genuine, he said, had he considered the French proposals that he had at once informed Berlin that negotiations would shortly begin between Italian and French Governments and Berlin had replied that so far as Germany was concerned there was no objection. Signor Mussolini asked me whether my Government knew of all this and I answered I did not think so,

² Signor Mussolini who was addressing the Executive Committee of the Rome Exhibition, planned for 1942, had stressed Italy's desire for peace.

³ See Volume IV of this Series, No. 342, note 2.

perhaps because M. Baudouin's mission had been private; he then requested me to explain to my Government exactly how the matter stood.

Count Ciano, who had meanwhile come in, observed that as he had told me already Italian Government were quite willing to enter into negotiations with French Government but after what had happened next move must be from the French side.

I then gave Signor Mussolini a message contained in second and third paragraphs of your telegram under reference. He read it very carefully and said he considered it of great importance. He felt that questions to which he had referred, namely Danzig, and Franco-Italian relations, were not of a kind which should involve the world in a catastrophe. There were, he added, certain minor questions which also required settlement but the two major ones were those of which he had spoken. He then asked me what were specified cases in which His Majesty's Government had publicly declared their intention to resist aggression. I replied that as far as I knew the three cases in question were those of Poland, Roumania and Greece. I mentioned incidentally Egypt, Iraq and Portugal as countries with whom we had alliances. He asked whether anything of the same sort had been said to Berlin. I replied that this was a purely verbal communication which my Government had wished me to make to him on my departure.

Signor Mussolini again emphasized how important he considered it but he remarked that it was necessary that the Press should abstain from publishing false and harmful rumours: he cited in this connexion the communication in the 'Figaro' in which it was stated that there were five German divisions in the Po Valley. He said he had never heard such a ridiculous story. To this I observed [? that] after all rumours of this kind had been very prevalent in Rome itself.

Repeated to Paris.

No. 243

Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 21, 12.0 noon)

No. 315 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 5688/54/18]

BERLIN, April 21, 1939

My telegram 313.¹

Roumanian Minister for Foreign Affairs after attending birthday review left last night for Brussels. Roumanian Minister informs me that M. Gafencu was very satisfied with the result of his interview with Herr Hitler in so far as concerns German-Roumanian relations.

2. He added Herr Hitler spoke very bitterly about Poland. Herr Hitler said that the German nation had had for centuries an innate contempt for the Poles and it was only Herr Hitler's restraining influence that had prevented matters coming to a head long ago. He had recently made what he

¹ No. 206.

considered a most generous offer to the Poles about Danzig which had been absolutely turned down.

3. The Italian and Belgian Ambassadors who are in specially close and friendly contact with the authorities both confirm Herr Hitler's indignation with the Poles and his determination to have Danzig in the future. Great Britain would be of course regarded as responsible for the recent Polish attitude.

4. M. Gafencu is also alleged to have stated he did not consider that Danzig was an adequate cause for a world war.

Repeated to Warsaw and Bucharest.

No. 244

Viscount Halifax to Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin)

No. 128 Telegraphic [C 5550/54/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 21, 1939, 7.0 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 313.¹

Please now see my telegram to Warsaw No. 115.² You had better, for the present, say nothing to the State Secretary lest by so doing we weaken the Polish position.

Repeated to Warsaw.

¹ No. 206.

² No. 237.

No. 245

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw)

No. 116 Telegraphic [C 5569/54/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 21, 1939, 7.0 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 120¹ as received here made no mention of Switzerland. Is latter country not to be included within the scope of the Polish Government's undertaking?

¹ No. 216.

No. 246

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)

No. 153 Saving: Telegraphic [C 5460/15/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 21, 1939*

My immediately following telegram¹ contains a first draft of the instructions which it is proposed to send to His Majesty's Ambassador at Moscow conveying our observations upon the Soviet proposal reported in his telegram No. 69.²

¹ No. 247.

² No. 201.

2. These draft instructions have not yet been finally approved and are to be considered by a Ministerial Committee on the morning of April 25. They indicate, however, our general attitude in the matter.

3. I shall be glad if you will let M. Bonnet know privately the lines on which His Majesty's Government think of replying and if you will say that I shall be grateful if I can be placed in possession before April 25 of any comments he may wish to make and of any indication he can give you of the lines on which the French Government propose to reply. It is desirable that the replies of His Majesty's Government and the French Government should be on similar lines.

4. I would emphasise once more the importance of keeping secret for the present the purport of the Soviet proposal and the reactions of the two Governments to it.

No. 247

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)

No. 154 Saving: Telegraphic [C 5460/15/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 21, 1939*

Following are draft instructions to His Majesty's Ambassador at Moscow referred to in my immediately preceding telegram No. 153 Saving.¹

Your telegram No. 69.²

1. His Majesty's Government have considered latest Soviet proposal but before commenting on its substance I propose to deal with misunderstanding referred to in your telegram No. 68.³

2. I do not recall having put to the Soviet Ambassador on April 11⁴ a direct question as to what form of assistance the Soviet Government could give to Roumania. Nor was I conscious that the Soviet Ambassador regarded himself as giving a reply to a specific question of mine when, on April 14,⁵ he informed me that the Soviet Government were prepared to take part in giving assistance to Roumania and asked our views as to the best methods by which such assistance could be given and as to the part the various Powers concerned could play in helping Roumania.

3. I did not think it necessary to discuss with him in detail at that stage the answer to these enquiries of his, since his communication to me had synchronised with a new suggestion of my own (communicated to you in my telegram No. 71⁶ and summarised by me to the Ambassador) which it seemed to me might bridge the differences between the points of view of the two Governments.

4. I do not understand why, as reported in paragraph 2 of your telegram No. 68, Soviet Government should affect to believe that His Majesty's Government are not committed by the Declarations they have made to

¹ No. 246.

² No. 201.

³ No. 196.

⁴ For this interview, see No. 42.

⁵ For this interview, see No. 176.

⁶ No. 170.

Poland and Roumania. The language of those Declarations (as also of the Declaration to Greece) makes it clear that in the event of any action being taken which clearly threatened the independence of these countries and which the latter considered it vital to resist, His Majesty's Government would feel themselves bound at once to lend them all the support in their power. The first condition is that there should be resistance to a clear threat to national independence. If such resistance is offered, His Majesty's Government will intervene.

5. It was on the strength of that definite commitment on our part that I suggested that the Soviet Government should for their part make a declaration in respect of their Western neighbours. It would of course have been for them to decide whether to include Latvia, Estonia and Finland as well as Poland and Roumania though it was the two latter which I had particularly in mind. If the Soviet Government wished to include Turkey also, so much the better, since His Majesty's Government are themselves engaged on discussions with the Turkish Government in order to associate the Turkish Government in the system they were trying to organise. I would add that it was no part of the intention of His Majesty's Government that the Soviet Government should commit themselves to intervene on behalf of Poland, Roumania (or Turkey) irrespective of whether Great Britain and France had already intervened. If the Soviet Government wished to make their own intervention contingent on that of Great Britain and France (at all events in respect of the countries which had been made the subject of declarations by Great Britain and France), His Majesty's Government for their part would have no objection.

6. If the formula suggested by me to the Soviet Ambassador limited the extent of Soviet assistance by confining it to cases in which assistance was desired, and to forms which would be acceptable by the countries concerned, this is dictated by an attitude on the part of those Governments for which we cannot be held responsible. Our object is to obtain early cover in the most practical form for the countries most immediately threatened, and it seemed to me that the formula which we suggested to the Soviet Government taken together with the assurances already given to Poland and Roumania by Great Britain and France would be the best way of securing this, though in effect we were asking the Soviet Government to commit themselves less completely than we were committed ourselves.

7. Our main criticism of the new proposal now made by the Soviet Government is that, though logically complete, it takes too little account of practical difficulties and would require a very long time for its negotiation, even were existing difficulties less serious than they are. His Majesty's Government are therefore still disposed to feel that the better plan is to start from what is immediately practicable and to build upon that basis.

8. The primary task must be to erect the first essential barrier against aggression in Eastern Europe by making arrangements for the safety of those States most directly menaced. It is only after we have completed this stage that we should be in a position to consider extending any arrangement to

other States, like the Soviet Union itself, which are not so immediately threatened.

9. In the scheme which we are in the process of organising the key positions are occupied by Poland and Turkey. In the case of Turkey, no difficulty arises so far as the Soviet Union is concerned. The Turkish Government are not only willing, but indeed anxious to be closely associated with the Soviet Government in any defensive arrangement that may be reached. With Poland, however, the case is different. The Soviet Government are well aware of the hesitation of the Polish Government to be too closely associated with the Soviet Union in political arrangements. The Soviet Government may well consider that this hesitation is unjustified, but it undoubtedly exists and must be taken into account. Rightly or wrongly, the Polish Government are convinced that if they were to enter into any public association with the Soviet Union this might be expected to sting Germany into aggressive action, and that this would be an unnecessary provocation to offer to Germany and one that ought to be avoided.

10. The Polish Government are in a very difficult position *vis-à-vis* Germany. They have conducted their relations with Germany with some skill and they have recently shown firmness and resolution in a threatening situation. It is undesirable to do anything to disturb Polish confidence at the present time and it is important that Polish self-reliance should be maintained. To enter into an arrangement with the Soviet Government at this stage by which Soviet assistance would be afforded, whether Poland likes it or not, would have a most disturbing influence in Warsaw which is nearest to the danger, and might jeopardise the success already achieved by His Majesty's Government and the French Government in rallying Poland to the common cause. Similarly, the Polish Government might also have good cause to complain if, after reaching an arrangement with His Majesty's Government for mutual assistance, His Majesty's Government were themselves to conclude an arrangement for mutual assistance with the Soviet Government, which, for its effective execution in the event of a German attack upon the United Kingdom, would almost certainly require that the Soviet forces should make use of Polish territory.

11. This does not mean to say that His Majesty's Government do not wish the Soviet Government to be associated with their efforts. On the contrary they are conscious that the support that might be afforded by the Soviet Government to the small Eastern European countries might be of the utmost value in case of war. The difficulty is that the Governments of those countries are reluctant either to engage themselves in a treaty of mutual assistance with the Soviet Union or even publicly to admit that Soviet assistance would be welcome to them. It is to meet this difficulty that His Majesty's Government have proposed that the Soviet Government should of their own volition make a declaration which would steady the situation by showing the willingness of the Soviet Government to collaborate and which at the same time would not disturb the possible beneficiaries of Soviet assistance by requiring them to accede to any arrangement to which the Soviet Government was a party.

By this proposal the Soviet Government would place their help, in whatever form seemed most desirable, at the disposal of States victims of aggression and themselves determined to resist, who wished to take advantage of it.

12. For the reasons given in the present telegram we are doubtful whether the time is yet ripe for the comprehensive proposal which the Soviet Government have made to us, and in the light of the explanations given in the present telegram would beg the Soviet Government to give their most favourable consideration to the proposal which I put to the Soviet Ambassador on April 14.

13. You should speak to M. Litvinov on the foregoing lines.

No. 248

Sir R. Clive (Brussels) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 22)

No. 37 Saving: Telegraphic [C 5759/15/18]

BRUSSELS, April 21, 1939

Your telegram No. 19.¹

As reported in my telegram No. 21,² the Belgian Minister for Foreign Affairs has informed the German Ambassador in reply to his question on the subject that Belgium did not fear attack from Germany.

2. Owing to a series of Cabinet crises since last December no public statements of importance have been made on foreign affairs by members of the Government. In any event it is hardly to be expected that outspoken references to the German menace should be made in a small country bordering on the Reich, particularly in view of the policy of independence which Belgium has professed for the last two and a half years. This does not mean however that Belgian public opinion now derives much assurance from the German guarantee of October 13, 1937.³ The most striking proof of this is to be found in the atmosphere in which the campaign preceding the General Elections which were held on April 2 was conducted. For, as the electoral battle developed, it became clear that all parties were agreed in proclaiming national union in the face of danger from abroad as the main plank of their platform. It was frequently emphasized by almost all sections of opinion that it was only by pursuing a resolute policy of national solidarity that Belgium could hope to escape the fate suffered by Czecho-Slovakia.

3. The press of all shades of opinion, with the exception of a few extremist Flemish organs, have followed the same line. On the whole, in discussing the international situation, they are inclined either to pass over in silence the German guarantee to Belgium or to draw the obvious conclusions as to its worth from the German occupation of Czecho-Slovakia. The following quotations from representative organs of different political parties illustrate the general feeling.

Article in the 'Libre Belgique' (Catholic) entitled 'L'Ombre de Hitler'

¹ No. 229.

² No. 236.

³ See Volume III of this Series, No. 325, note 2.

deals at length with the value of German promises. After declaring that there is nothing that the Belgians would welcome more gladly than friendly and sincere gestures from their eastern neighbour and nothing that they would like better than to be able to trust in her assurances, the writer goes on to say that Belgium has not been able to acquire any feeling of confidence in view of 'the resounding clash of arms, the warlike imprecations, the cries of defiance interrupted by moments of strange silence more alarming than boasts and menaces' which are heard the other side of the frontier. Contentment with things as they are is foreign to the nature of a people 'which on its own admission only feels alive when engaged in aggression and considers itself decadent in a time of concord'. A number of quotations from German writers including Ludendorff and Hitler himself lead to the conclusion that the old German mysticism boils up and crystallises once more round its new Wotan, scion of the great legends which have exalted the race and welded its warlike soul.

'De Standaard' of March 24. Speaking of the reaffirmation of Britain's guarantee to Belgium, Switzerland and Holland, the paper says that Chamberlain and Bonnet have come to the conclusion that France and England will immediately put their guarantees into force. That is logical: an attack against any of these small lands would endanger France and England themselves. Hitler too has promised and even solemnly pledged himself to guarantee the independence of Belgium and Switzerland and has declared himself ready to do the same for Holland. But one is beginning to ask oneself what a pledge from Hitler is now worth.

'Het Laatste Nieuws' (Liberal) of April 2. Reviewing the events in Czecho-Slovakia which led to its first betrayal by the internal foes, the writer of the article says: 'In the circumstances, although the position of Czecho-Slovakia cannot be compared with that of other nations, yet it is none the less clear that the smaller States have not only to see to it that their national defences are really effective but also that mutual confidence and a feeling of unity should be established throughout the population if they do not wish to be towed in the wake of those who consciously or unconsciously open the doors to adventurers.'

'Le Matin' (Liberal), March 30. 'When one considers the predatory nations ensconced in the centre of Europe and on the confines of Asia—when one sees how the blindness and weakness of the great democracies have allowed these nations to gain the upper hand in strength; when one realises that these closely-united conquering nations have already subjugated four ill-defended countries, and that their ambitions, served by essentially dynamic régimes, will not for a long time yet encounter effective resistance, one cannot but contemplate with anguish the danger which threatens the small European countries.'

'Le Peuple' (Socialist), April 21. 'On the very morrow of the invasion of Albania, Mussolini asserts that he does not wish to attack anyone, and that all that Italy wants is to continue to work. It is easier to say this than to make people believe it, particularly as, on the previous day, a Fascist review, edited

by the Minister Bottai, reiterated the customary threats addressed to France and England. This clumsy hypocrisy can deceive no one, not even in Italy.'

'Vingtième Siècle' (Catholic), April 11. 'What we wish to demonstrate is the necessity of a true, watchful and courageous policy of independence. We have raised our voice against the slipping of this independence in the direction of a rigid and systematic policy of neutrality solely from the false idea that such a policy will automatically bring security. Far from it, in certain circumstances, it would make aggression easy thus bringing war nearer. In particular, such a policy would, as we have pointed out, facilitate the invasion of Holland and a direct consequence of such an invasion must be sooner or later the invasion of Belgium. We hardly think it necessary to demonstrate that the existence of the Netherlands is one of the essential elements of Belgian security.'

4. While, as I have stated above, prominent personalities in Belgium show a natural reluctance publicly to declare their conviction of Germany's or Italy's bad faith, it is clear from opinions expressed in private conversation that no one with a sense of realities has any illusion on this subject.

5. With regard to the likelihood of Herr Hitler using statements such as that made on April 18 to the German Ambassador in his forthcoming speech to the Reichstag, the only reference to this possibility which I have so far noticed in the Press is given in 'La Meuse', a provincial Liberal paper, which forecasting the answer that Germany and Italy will give to President Roosevelt's telegram, suggests that they will state that the undertakings they have given to individual Powers should be quite sufficient to reassure the American President as to their peaceful intentions (see my telegram No. 36 Saving⁴).

⁴ Not printed.

No. 249

Sir R. Clive (Brussels) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 22)

No. 38 Saving: Telegraphic [C 5743/3356/18]

BRUSSELS, April 21, 1939

I met M. Gafencu at luncheon today at the Roumanian Legation.

He spoke of his 1½ hours' talk with Herr Hitler, during a great part of which Hitler raved against England, referring to France as quite secondary. It was England who was opposing Germany both politically and economically. Hitler spoke of war and its appalling results. While he admitted German towns might be destroyed the destruction in England would be far greater. He spoke of some new German chemical invention. And at the end of it all the Russians might be the chief gainers. Yet M. Gafencu had the impression Hitler did not want war, and even now would like an 'Ausgleich'¹ with England.

As regards Roumania he did not complain of the treatment of Germans

¹ i.e. settlement.

in Transylvania and even I gathered was ready to guarantee that Hungary would not attack Roumania.

What chiefly roused Hitler's wrath was the question of our relations with the Soviet Union and our invoking the aid of the Soviets to encircle Germany and this point especially I gather M. Gafencu will wish to discuss with Your Lordship. Ribbentrop had previously spoken to him much in the same sense.

Later M. Gafencu had a talk with Sir F. Leith-Ross.²

² Sir F. Leith-Ross, Chief Economic Adviser to His Majesty's Government, was in Belgium on a short visit before going to Roumania as head of the British Trade Mission.

No. 250

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 22)
No. 229 Saving: Telegraphic [C 5756/3356/18]

PARIS, April 21, 1939

My telegram No. 182¹ of today's date (negotiations with Soviet Government).

His Majesty's Minister impressed on Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs this afternoon the importance of not allowing terms of the Soviet proposal,² nor the reactions of His Majesty's Government and the French Government, to become public. M. Léger expressed entire agreement. He had given instructions that Press enquiries should be answered merely with the statement that a counter-proposal had been received from the Soviet, the answer which he saw had been given to the British Press.

M. Léger stated that the French Government had not yet considered the Soviet proposal. As soon as they had any views to express they would inform His Majesty's Government.

¹ Not printed. See No. 232, note 2.

² See No. 201.

No. 251

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 22)
No. 232 Saving: Telegraphic [R 3144/7/22]

PARIS, April 21, 1939

My telegram No. 181¹ of today.

I have had a quite satisfactory interview on this subject with M. Bonnet, and I am seeing M. Daladier himself on April 22. I shall bring every possible argument to bear upon him.

¹ Not printed. In this telegram Sir E. Phipps stated that he had informed M. Daladier and M. Bonnet that he would be delivering a message urging 'the speediest contact between France and Italy' and that he had arranged to see M. Bonnet during the afternoon.

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 21, 1939*

M. de Charbonnière of the French Embassy came this afternoon, on M. Corbin's instructions, to show me a memorandum by the Quai d'Orsay on the latest Soviet proposal.¹ It was, he explained, merely a departmental memorandum and did not necessarily represent the Government's view. The Quai d'Orsay had naturally examined the Soviet memorandum from the point of view of its bearing on the provisions of the Franco-Soviet Pact.

2. The following is the sense of the observations of the Quai d'Orsay on the various points in the Russian paper.

Point 1. The proposal the French Government had made to the Russians was for an agreement of mutual assistance between France and Russia which would apply in the event of either country being exposed to German attack as a result of their going to the assistance of Roumania or Poland.

The Franco-Soviet Pact depends for its operation upon the provisions of the League Covenant and the Locarno Treaty. This tends to weaken it, if not totally to destroy its effect. What the Russians have now proposed is a treaty providing for immediate mutual assistance accompanied by precise military engagements.

Point 2. The new Russian proposal would oblige France to go to the assistance of Finland, Estonia and Latvia as well as to Poland and Roumania. On the other hand it does not impose on the Soviet Government any obligation in respect of Switzerland, Belgium or Holland.

Points 4 and 5. These provisions will not be acceptable to the Polish Government. On the one hand they insist that British assistance to Poland should be limited to the case of Germany only and should not apply to an attack on Poland by Russia. On the other hand the Russian plan will provide for a guarantee to Russia against Poland.

General Observations

(a) The Quai d'Orsay think that Russia is entitled to ask for the same kind of guarantee from Great Britain and France as Poland is receiving and that she could hardly be expected to undertake any obligations without receiving such a guarantee.

(b) The Russian proposal, unlike the Franco-Soviet Pact, provides for automatic and immediate assistance and it also completes the Soviet Pact by bringing in a guarantee of mutual assistance between Great Britain and Russia.

(c) The Quai d'Orsay think that Finland and the Baltic States ought not to be included in the plan; but if the Russians insist on their inclusion it would be necessary as a counterpart to obtain the inclusion of a Russian

¹ See No. 201.

guarantee for France in the event of France going to war with Germany in defence of Switzerland, Belgium, Luxemburg and the Netherlands.

(d) The Quai d'Orsay recommend the omission of all reference to reciprocal guarantees exchanged by Great Britain and Poland and to the Polish-Roumanian Treaty. The inclusion of provisions of this kind, which manifest distrust of certain parties to the proposed agreement, is inappropriate.

I told M. de Charbonnière that our own observations on the Russian plan were in preparation and that we hoped that they would shortly be in the hands of Sir E. Phipps, who would be instructed to communicate them to M. Bonnet. M. de Charbonnière said that M. Corbin was leaving for Paris tonight and would stay several days. I said that I felt sure Sir E. Phipps would have his instructions before M. Corbin returned to London.

W. STRANG

CHAPTER IV

The European situation: visit of the Roumanian Foreign Minister to London, April 23–26: Herr Hitler's speech of April 28: further correspondence with the French and Soviet Governments: Anglo-Turkish negotiations. (April 22–30, 1939.)

No. 253

Sir R. Campbell (Belgrade) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 22, 9.30 a.m.)
No. 88 Telegraphic [C 5763/15/18]

BELGRADE, April 22, 1939, 12.50 a.m.

Your telegram [No.] 109.¹

Yugoslav Government have been asked (1) whether they feel threatened by Germany (2) whether they did anything to inspire President Roosevelt's message.

They are replying in the negative to both questions as according to Minister for Foreign Affairs Belgian and Roumanian Governments have already done.

When I pointed out prejudicial effect which such answers would have on the prospects opened up by President Roosevelt's move the Minister for Foreign Affairs replied that answer to question (2) was true and asked pathetically what other answer Yugoslavia could have given to question (1).

I am unable to send any material for B.B.C. German broadcasts as no public statements expressing appreciation have been made nor has any hint of such been allowed to appear in the press.

¹ No. 229.

No. 254

Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 22, 4.10 p.m.)
No. 317 Telegraphic [C 5760/54/18]

BERLIN, April 22, 1939, 12.49 p.m.

My telegram No. 315.¹

I asked Polish Ambassador last night what was his view of present position of negotiations concerning Danzig. I had hitherto found the Ambassador rather reluctant to furnish information but he is now more communicative.

¹ No. 243.

He said that on March 26 he made his last official communication to German Government. Herr von Ribbentrop had made following demands : (1) Cession of Danzig in return for maintenance of certain privileges. (2) Right to construct an extra-territorial corridor across the Corridor with an offer of guarantees for Polish Corridor. (3) The adherence of Poland to an anti-Comintern or a similar Pact.

In return for above, Germany also offered to guarantee existing Polish frontiers for a period of years. I understand about twenty-five to thirty.

Polish Ambassador on instructions from his Government had replied :

1. Refusing to consent to union of Danzig with the Reich, pointing out that Poland had certain rights and interests in Danzig but offering subject to concurrence of League of Nations to negotiate with Germany settlement of any specific grievances.
2. Refusing a German corridor with extra-territorial privileges but offering to consider extension of existing transit facilities. In this matter Poles were apprehensive of Czech precedent.
3. No reply was made to request concerning anti-Comintern Pact as the Ambassador stated that Poland would not agree to this proposal.

I informed the Ambassador that I had heard that Germany had also offered Poland to share with Hungary and herself in a condominium of Slovakia. The Ambassador replied that he had heard of this only two days ago but that so far as he was aware it was not yet official. Speaking personally he did not think it was a practical proposition.

Repeated to Warsaw.

No. 255

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 22, 6.0 p.m.)

No. 184 Telegraphic [R 3166/7/22]

PARIS, April 22, 1939, 3.10 p.m.

Your telegram No. 176¹ and my telegram No. 232 Saving.²

As you may imagine I found M. Bonnet in agreement with His Majesty's Government.

This morning I was for over half an hour with M. Daladier who was, as I expected, in a very different frame of mind.

I opened by telling President of the Council that I had yesterday evening handed to Minister for Foreign Affairs *aide-mémoire* respecting Franco-Italian relations, but I wanted to address a more personal verbal appeal to himself based on the close relations between our two countries, on friendship that their respective Ministers felt for one another and, if I might say so, on my own warm feelings of affection for France and the French.

Having received M. Daladier's permission to speak with the utmost frank-

¹ No. 238.

² No. 251.

ness I went back to the past. I mentioned the old feeling of a 'poor relation' that Italians had always had towards French. This produced a combination of rudeness and extreme susceptibility that was certainly offensive but should perhaps not be taken too tragically.

I referred to my old friend Berthelot, the predecessor of M. Léger as Secretary-General of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and to his violent Italo-phobia which was well known to all Italians.

Speaking very privately I feared that much of that feeling had been inherited by some of the permanent officials at Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

I urged M. Daladier not to attach an undue importance to secret service reports regarding sinister Italian intentions. We also received such reports: they should make us, and had made us, vigilant but we should not base our whole policy upon them.

France and Great Britain were getting stronger and stronger materially: a slight sign from the former that she was ready to listen to reasonable claims by Italy could not possibly be interpreted as a proof of weakness. Not one tank need be moved from the Alps, not one destroyer from Mediterranean; on the contrary, taken from great strength, so reasonable and generous a step could only meet with world approval. If Italian claims proved preposterous a firm French negative could close the talks.

I laid stress on the great importance that must be attached to the fact that Lord Perth with his personal years of experience of Italy and French Ambassador with his great experience of the Axis Powers at Berlin, agreed that Franco-Italian relations were the key to peace or war. Posterity would judge us severely if we neglected their advice to establish contact between the two Powers of whom one, viz. France, was great enough and generous enough not to need to fear any resulting loss of prestige.

Our distinct impression was that Signor Mussolini still wished to avert war, from which he and his country knew that they had most to lose. If we were wrong the harm done was infinitesimal compared to our gain if we were right.

Could not M. François-Poncet go and see Count Ciano before April 28 and talk about several quite important though minor questions that must exist between the two great neighbouring States? In the course of conversation he might at a favourable moment lightly ask what in effect Italy's claims were.

M. Daladier listened most attentively and showed utmost friendliness throughout but I fear I failed to shake him.

He is convinced that the present Italian Government are gangsters. They are in with Herr Hitler up to the hilt. They were so even before Munich. Prime Minister and he himself had been bluffed and lied to at Munich. He almost regretted that we had not made war then, or rather he felt that, if we had been sufficiently firm, Herr Hitler and Signor Mussolini would have given way.

I urged [? that] Signor Mussolini greatly helped to save peace just before Munich; but M. Daladier denied this maintaining that Mussolini merely felt that he was not ready for war then.

Now it was quite different: he was digging himself in in Albania where large masses of Italian troops were still arriving.

The Albanian outrage had rendered conversations almost impossible. Moslem opinion was violently anti-Italian in consequence and he (M. Daladier) had received countless messages and telegrams from North African Chieftains expressing intense loyalty to France, hatred of Italy and calling upon French Government to show utmost firmness. If nations in French North Africa heard (and Italians would trumpet it abroad) that French Government had asked what Italy wanted, they would despise them and French prestige there would be reduced to zero.

M. Daladier assured me he did not mind much about any petty question as to who should open the talks (although it would be natural for Italian Ambassador here to do so); but what he feared was a trap laid purposely by Italian gangsters to destroy the wonderful feelings of loyalty that now existed all over North Africa and even in Syria towards France.

Finally M. Daladier promised to give this matter his most earnest consideration but you will see outlook does not seem hopeful.

Repeated to Rome.

No. 256

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 22, 4.50 p.m.)
No. 185 Telegraphic [R 3577/7/22]

PARIS, April 22, 1939, 3.10 p.m.

My immediately preceding telegram.¹

I naturally made great play with momentous announcement that Prime Minister will make next week.² This also was a sign of force that should prevent all false accusation of weakness from producing any effect.

This decision of His Majesty's Government I felt moreover entitled them to hope that M. Daladier would earnestly consider their suggestions regarding Franco-Italian contact.

¹ No. 255.

² i.e. the announcement of the introduction of conscription.

No. 257

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 22, 7.0 p.m.)
No. 155 Telegraphic [R 3236/661/67]

ANGORA, April 22, 1939, 4.49 p.m.

Following for Sir O. Sargent:

My telegram No. 154.¹

In point of fact this will make no difference with Turkish Government and I find it much easier to act alone. Turkish Government know quite well that I am speaking for my French colleague or at least that he and I are in closest possible touch.

¹ No. 258. These telegrams were despatched in reverse order.

No. 258

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax

(Received April 22, 7.0 p.m.)

No. 154 Telegraphic [R 3175/661/67]

ANGORA, *April 22, 1939, 4.50 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 126.¹

My French colleague who has standing instructions to act with me in these matters is perturbed because he has received no similar instructions from Paris. On telegraphing to the Quai d'Orsay he was informed that the French Minister for Foreign Affairs knew nothing about your telegram. I promised to inform you of this.

¹ No. 219.

No. 259

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 22, 7.45 p.m.)

No. 186 Telegraphic [R 3563/7/22]

PARIS, *April 22, 1939, 5.25 p.m.*

My telegram No. 184¹ and Sir A. Cadogan's telephone message of this morning.²

I have some reason to believe that my conversation with M. Daladier this morning may not be entirely fruitless, and that some contact may be sought with Italy (probably in Paris), but only *after* Prime Minister's announcement. If the latter could be advanced to Tuesday³ there would still be time for Franco-Italian contact to produce useful results before Herr Hitler's speech. If announcement were only made on Wednesday there would hardly be time for such results. Moreover, Franco-Italian contact would, if only made on Thursday, look too much like a last-hour manoeuvre to embarrass Herr Hitler.

¹ No. 255.

² Mr. Campbell telephoned to ask whether the Prime Minister's announcement could be made before April 26. Sir A. Cadogan replied that it was unlikely that an earlier announcement could be made.

³ April 25. The announcement was made on April 26. See No. 284.

No. 260

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora)

No. 131 Telegraphic [R 3073/661/67]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 22, 1939, 6.0 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 147.¹

1. *Point 1.* I could not object to the communication by the Turkish Government to the Soviet Government of the purport of the former's present

¹ No. 239.

political conversations with His Majesty's Government; it must be made quite clear, however, that what is said in any staff conversations which may take place between His Majesty's Government and the Turkish Government is for Turkish ears only.

2. *Point 2.* I will communicate with you further on this point in due course.

Repeated to Paris, Warsaw, Bucharest, Athens, Sofia, Belgrade, Moscow and Rome.

No. 261

Sir S. Waterlow (Athens) to Viscount Halifax

(Received April 22, 8.30 p.m.)

No. 161 Telegraphic [C 5772/15/18]

ATHENS, April 22, 1939, 8.20 p.m.

German Government have addressed following questions to Greek Government:

1. Does Greece feel herself to be threatened by Germany?
2. Did Greek Government authorize or encourage President Roosevelt to send his message?

Greek Government have replied as follows:

1. Greece has never been threatened by Germany. She hopes that nothing will happen to change the friendly intentions of Germany towards her. Firmly attached to ideal of peace she ardently hopes that peace may be maintained.
2. Greece had no previous knowledge of Mr. Roosevelt's intentions.

No. 262

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax

(Received April 23, 9.0 a.m.)

No. 123 Telegraphic [C 5765/15/18]

WARSAW, April 22, 1939, 9.20 p.m.

Bucharest telegram No. 133.¹

The Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs tells me that the Polish Government have not been approached by Germany in connexion with President Roosevelt's appeal. They know definitely that the following have been approached: Norway, Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia, Belgium and Luxemburg. And that Norway and Estonia have replied in categorical negative to both questions.

¹ No. 217.

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax

(Received April 23, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 122 Telegraphic [C 5815/54/18]

WARSAW, April 22, 1939, 9.30 p.m.

Your telegram No. 114.¹

I thought it as well, instead of approaching M. Beck again on the subject, to talk frankly to Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs and to request him to pass on to M. Beck anything I said. I read to him the relevant passages in your telegram and added that from various reports I had received it seemed that the German Government were making it generally understood that Poland was at the present moment adopting an intransigent attitude as regards Danzig, being encouraged to do so by British guarantee. It was, therefore, natural that my Government should feel somewhat anxious and entitled to receive any information regarding developments.

M. Arciszewski told me that there had been no change in the attitude of the Polish Government since Mr. Chamberlain's Declaration. They had always maintained that there should be no dictated settlement of Danzig question though they were prepared to consider any proposals which the German Government might make.

I here asked for definite information as to what the German proposals there had been and how they had been made. M. Arciszewski said that about a month ago Herr von Ribbentrop had while making no formal demand put forward a proposal for incorporation of Danzig in the Reich and a corridor across the Corridor. As regards the latter both Herr Hitler and various other German authorities had demanded a 'free road' and it was only lately that certain German experts had proposed extra-territoriality for any such road. As M. Beck had told me Polish Government were now awaiting return of German Ambassador from Berlin in the supposition that he may bring proposals of a detailed nature.

The Polish Government could not, of course, agree to the incorporation of Danzig in the Reich though they were fully prepared to discuss negotiation of a new Statute for the Free City. They realized that they would have to make certain cessions such as the relinquishment of representation of foreign affairs, the Polish postal service and so forth, but there was a considerable gap between extreme German demands and what the Polish Government felt they could offer.

M. Arciszewski again mentioned the difficulties of making radical concessions at present moment when the morale of Polish people had been keyed up to a high pitch. Were M. Beck to make extreme concessions under German pressure the indignation here would be such that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs would be exposed to drastic criticism if not worse.

He then asked whether I had any suggestions to make. I said that I had no instructions to do so but that I must ask him to repeat my remarks in

¹ No. 234.

detail to M. Beck so that he should be aware of the preoccupation of His Majesty's Government that the impression should not gain ground that Poland had been encouraged by British guarantee to adopt an obstructive attitude on this question.

I am to see M. Beck tomorrow and shall discuss the matter more fully with him.

Repeated to Berlin and Danzig.

No. 264

Sir W. Seeds (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 23, 9.0 p.m.)
No. 73 Telegraphic [R 3178/661/67]

MOSCOW, April 22, 1939, 10.15 p.m.

Angora telegram No. 147.¹

1. Turkish Ambassador informs me that M. Potemkin² is leaving today for Angora on a special mission.

2. Soviet Government had apparently suggested that Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs should go to Batoum to meet a Soviet envoy but Minister for Foreign Affairs had pleaded inability to absent himself from Angora.

Repeated to Angora.

¹ No. 239.

² Assistant Commissar for Foreign Affairs.

No. 265

Mr. Preston (Kouvo) to Mr. Orde (Riga)
No. 15 Saving: Telegraphic¹ [C 5771/15/18]

KOVNO, April 22, 1939

Foreign Office telegram No. 127 to Angora.²

For obvious reasons there have been no public utterances or press comments explicitly stating by whom Lithuania is threatened. That she is apprehensive however is implicit in all behaviour of Lithuanians and their manifest anxiety. That danger comes from Germany is implicit in official expressions of determination not to yield one inch of territory 'more' (after Memel) and intensifying of campaign for armament fund since the cession of Memelland; and also in the steady exodus and preparations of the Jews whose only potential *enemy* is Germany.

2. The way in which danger to Lithuanian independence, which forms the subject of numerous speeches and articles, is coupled with loss of Memelland appears in 'Lietuvos Aidas' of March 30, where armament fund appeal says 'following the loss of Memelland Lithuanians should be determined and prepared to defend Lithuanian's [*sic*] independence'.

¹ This telegram was addressed to Riga as No. 15 Saving and was repeated as No. 27 to the Foreign Office, where it was received on April 22 at 6 p.m.

² No. 229.

3. I need hardly call attention to exposed position of Lithuania and possible consequences of any direct reference to this country.

Repeated to Berlin and Foreign Office.

No. 266

Letter from Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Sir A. Cadogan

[C 6061/1110/55]

BRITISH EMBASSY, WARSAW, *April 22, 1939*

I think I ought to let you know that some surprise and anxiety is being expressed in Polish economic and financial circles that nothing was said during M. Beck's visit to London of any financial assistance to Poland for the purpose of (1) paying for the partial mobilisation which may have to continue throughout the summer, and (2) for the general rearmament of Poland, especially laying in stocks of raw materials necessary in war.

M. Beck's economic advisers say that he absolutely refused to connect the questions of finance and political co-operation. His friends say that he was so gratified at Poland's being accepted as an equal ally that he felt it would be undignified as a gentleman to gentlemen to ask direct for financial help. This would be in accordance with his and the Polish character.

It is of course not for me to suggest unasked what we ought to do, but I do wish seriously to lay before you the situation so far as I can elucidate it. The Polish Budget was going to be a very tight fit this year anyway, and the semi-mobilisation must be costing them something like £2,300,000 per month. I give this figure with great diffidence. They are collecting by means of a patriotic loan about £10,000,000. This money is also taken out of the general economy for the time being and must mean that the large enterprises which have been amongst the biggest contributors have somehow got to cut down expenses and stocks. It has been alleged that this patriotic loan, nominally raised for air defence, i.e. new A.A. guns and aircraft, will in fact be used to pay for the mobilisation, but Polish economic experts deny this. One of them put the matter very well to a member of my staff yesterday. He said that there are four elements in Polish ability to resist German aggression:

(1) The internal political situation. This is for the time being very satisfactory. There are practically no political prisoners in concentration camps. The political refugees have almost all returned and been pardoned. The Socialist Party have spontaneously given up May 1 as a day of *chômage* and agitation and have even offered that the Trades Unions shall work without pay on that day.

(2) Foreign Policy. This also our friend, who has not seen eye to eye with M. Beck in recent months, described as very satisfactory. Trade relations with Russia, for instance, were now quite satisfactory.

(3) The military situation. On this he was not competent to speak.

(4) The financial and economic situation, which is his special care. This, he said quite frankly and for the broad reasons given above, was definitely

worrying him. As regards stocks of raw materials necessary for military resistance, there were two aspects:

(a) Materials such as coal which had to be shifted from the western areas liable to be overrun by Germany to factories in the Central Industrial Area.

(b) The provisions of stocks of materials not produced in Poland, e.g. cotton, wool, aluminium, tungsten, manganese, etc. These mostly came from countries which required to be paid in 'Devisen'. They would not necessarily all be used at once, and if there were no war Poland could probably gradually pay for them. But at the moment these stocks did not exist and Poland did not see how she could acquire them. He said, speaking personally, and I have heard the same from many sources here, that the democratic countries might be willing to provide a revolving banking credit. I am not an expert in these matters, but I have also heard it suggested that these stocks could be even held in the name of the country providing a credit and that Poland should only become indebted for them in proportion as she was able to use them for actual manufacture of war material. Another aspect of the matter which would assist Polish economy is the provision of ordinary acceptance credits, of course with a British Government guarantee. This would be used to assist the Polish export trade.

I well realise that the same plea is being made directly by several other countries, and have no doubt that the Polish problem is being studied, and if Staff conversations ensue, will be studied with every sympathy.

Polish morale is excellent and they may even be said to have an exaggerated idea of their military ability. Nevertheless they are the one fighting nation left in Eastern Europe, and there is now I think no fear of their accepting our help and then going sour on us.

If, as I believe to be the case, it is true that the British Empire will face for the next year or so a situation which will settle its fate and that of Europe for perhaps a century, ought we not to demonstrate our realisation of what is at stake. The democracies are supposed to be both rich and generous—surely now is the time for the financial weapon to be used to the full, not to bolster up timorous and half-hearted peoples, but to enable the one really determined nation in this part of the world to keep an eastern front in being during those early months in which German strategy is likely to endeavour to knock them out of the ring.

It may interest you to know that when the reservists were called up 94 per cent. of the Christians responded and 98 per cent. of the Jews. In normal times I gather that only 50 per cent. of Jews would have turned up for the manœuvres, but on this occasion, as our friend remarked, it was with the prospect of having to fight.

I have heard some criticism, though not so much as I should have expected, of Great Britain's refusal to have conscription, but our reputation here is very high just now. I think Beck was very wise not to allow the 'alliance' to be made the subject of popular rejoicings. It happened to suit him and I think it suited us, for such demonstrations as in the recent case of the Polish-Hungarian frontier may leave a nasty taste in the mouth the day

after. The question of financial and economic help is, however, not one of sentiment but of practical necessity, and if there is, as we all trust, no war, not only will Poland be able to weather the economic storm moderately well, but we shall have gained an economic position here which despite all talk of the complementary nature of Polish-German trade will be very useful in time of peace.

Yours ever,
H. W. KENNARD

No. 267

Letter from Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Sir O. Sargent

[C 6516/54/18]

BRITISH EMBASSY, WARSAW, April 22, 1939

I apologize for sending you in this letter a number of disconnected bits of information gathered in the last few days by myself and my staff. Warsaw is however nowadays a centre for that kind of diplomatic talk which is more than mere gossip and yet not *documenté* enough to be put into telegrams or despatches. So here goes.

1. Beck's Chef de Cabinet told one of my colleagues yesterday that Poland knew that Germany had recently pressed Japan for a military alliance. Japanese Ministers and Ambassadors in Europe had been instructed to 'get together', I believe in Paris, and discuss the matter. In the event the Japanese Government had decided 'notwithstanding the recommendation of their European representatives' to turn the proposal down.

2. A report reaches me via the United States Ambassador, though he cannot vouch for it, that Italy at the time of the Albanian *coup* assured Yugoslavia and Bulgaria that if a general war resulted, Italy would have no objection to those two countries helping themselves to their territorial *desiderata* in Greece. These *desiderata* had been specified in a secret agreement between Bulgaria and Yugoslavia some two years ago.

3. There seems little doubt that there is a deliberate and intensive German campaign amongst 'neutrals' designed to drive a wedge between us and Poland over (1) Danzig and (2) Soviet co-operation. I understand that it is even having some success in circles to which the whisper 'Hitler is *very* angry' seems like a tip from the stable. I was therefore glad to note that the Foreign Office was not rattled into sending instructions either to me or to Berlin to display undue anxiety. I thought the language of your telegram No. 115¹ admirably chosen.

Apart from these items I take this opportunity to add that, difficult as the Danzig problem is, I trust that His Majesty's Government will never attempt to mediate between Poland and Germany over it, and that the British press will not in mingled zeal and ignorance try to suggest what the solution should

¹ No. 237.

be. Much time is needed for the Polish people to accustom themselves to the idea of any concession at all.²

Yours ever,
H. W. KENNARD

² Mr. Strang noted on this letter that the Foreign Office was 'fully alive to the considerations which Sir H. Kennard advances.'

No. 268

Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 23, 4.0 p.m.)
No. 319 Telegraphic [C 5762/15/18]

BERLIN, April 23, 1939, 2.14 p.m.

My telegram 317.¹

A friend who is on Herr Hitler's personal staff and to whom the Chancellor frequently gives his views on politics dined with me privately last night. He gave me the following information:

1. Colonel Beck was aware of the German proposals regarding Danzig (? problem when he)² visited Herr Hitler at Berchtesgaden and certainly last month. Herr Hitler assumed that Colonel Beck informed you of them when he was in London.³

2. Herr Hitler does not trust Colonel Beck and he is so annoyed at any

¹ No. 254.

² The text is here uncertain.

³ Lord Halifax commented on this telegram 'Is it not the case that Beck gave us to understand that there had been no definite proposals and that the matter had not reached the stage of negotiation? If so, he has been less than frank and I should be disposed to say something to him.' Mr. Makins minuted as follows: 'I think Colonel Beck has been guilty of *suppressio veri* rather than of *suggestio falsi*. If, as seems to be the case, the German proposals were made and rejected before Colonel Beck came to London, then Colonel Beck was entitled to say that "the Danzig question was not yet in negotiable shape; that no negotiations were in progress; that conversations about Danzig had been going on for some time; that he did not know whether it would be possible to reach agreement with Germany but that he was trying to reach an agreement." Where Colonel Beck failed in frankness was in omitting to disclose the fact that these demands had been presented to him by the Germans and rejected. He did not "come clean" until April 23 [see No. 274]. I do not know whether in these circumstances the Secretary of State wishes to pursue the matter with Colonel Beck, who is in any case well known for his economy of the truth.' Mr. Strang minuted as follows: 'Colonel Beck certainly ought to have told us more about this during his visit, especially as we had already, before his arrival, given Poland our guarantee. I think, however, he may possibly be more frank with us in future. We have told him that the guarantee we have given to Poland entitles us to ask him to keep us informed: and he seems now to be doing so rather more fully. It is worth noting, also, that the two Governments have agreed that in the formal arrangement which is to be negotiated it will be provided that the two Governments will keep each other fully and promptly informed of any developments threatening their independence. I suggest that we should let Sir H. Kennard know that we feel that Colonel Beck might have been more frank with us, and leave it to him to choose the moment and the terms for conveying this to Colonel Beck.' Lord Halifax approved Mr. Strang's suggestion, and Mr. Makins showed the minutes to Mr. Norton, Counsellor at H.M. Embassy, Warsaw, for the information of Sir H. Kennard.

turning down of the German proposals regarding Danzig that he may not repeat the offer.

3. Herr Hitler considers President Roosevelt to be either a madman or a fool and is looking forward with relish to replying to him on April 28.

4. Herr Hitler has not yet given up hope of permanent good relations with Great Britain one of his oldest and dearest ambitions. He has that [*sic*] expressed desire that some really prominent personage with a fluent knowledge of German should come and have a man-to-man talk without the intermediary of an interpreter as has been hitherto the case.

Repeated to Warsaw.

No. 269

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax

(Received April 23, 10.15 p.m.)

No. 158 Telegraphic [R 3176/661/67]

ANGORA, April 23, 1939, 5.19 p.m.

Your telegram No. 126.¹

Minister for Foreign Affairs has expressed to me personally especial anxiety to have your views on the following three points if possible before the meeting of Popular Party on the morning of April 25 (to which reply to your telegram is to be submitted) and in any case before the arrival here of M. Potemkin which he understands will be on April 26.

1. Exact position of our conversations with the Soviet Government.

2. Position and the attitude of the Yugoslav Government, especially as affected or likely to be affected by the visits of Yugoslav Minister for Foreign Affairs to Venice and Berlin and also by the forthcoming visit to Berlin of Prince Paul (which the Minister for Foreign Affairs understands has been arranged).

3. Your general view as to the next probable move of the Axis Powers. (He worded this question as follows: 'Whether the Axis Powers intend to start a war and if so when and where').

Repeated to Paris, Rome, Bucharest, Warsaw, Athens, Sofia, Belgrade and Moscow.

¹ No. 219.

No. 270

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)

No. 182 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 3175/661/67]

FOREIGN OFFICE, April 23, 1939¹

My telegram No. 126 to Angora.²

Please inform French Government at once and endeavour to persuade

¹ The time of despatch of this telegram is not recorded.

² No. 219.

hem to instruct their Ambassador at Angora to support His Majesty's Ambassador's *démarche*.³

³ Sir E. Phipps replied on April 24 that the French Government had sent the necessary instructions to the French Ambassador at Angora.

No. 271

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 24, 2.15 a.m.)

No. 159 Telegraphic [R 3177/661/67]

ANGORA, April 23, 1939, 10.0 p.m.

Your telegram No. 131.¹

1. I informed Minister for Foreign Affairs accordingly on April 23.

2. He told me that reply of Turkish Government to your telegram No. 126² would be handed to me either on evening of April 25 or morning of April 26. Reason for delay was that approval of Grand National Assembly was necessary as reply would deal with matters of principle. Turkish Government did not wish to create sensation by summoning special meeting of Popular Party and had therefore decided to submit matter to ordinary party meeting which takes place on April 25.

3. In the meanwhile . . .³ tells me that reply would be 'positive' and would express agreement in principle with points set forth in your telegram.

4. His Excellency explained there had been a slight misunderstanding on one point, namely their supposed desire for a public statement and a secret agreement. This was not, and would not be in accordance with Turkish constitution. Reason for which he had suggested a public statement (see point one in last paragraph of my telegram No. 133⁴) was that Turkish Government thought it might be necessary to make some declaration at once to strengthen peace front. Sequence of events which he had in mind when making this suggestion was (1) a declaration on lines of Point 1 above if necessary (2) negotiations for complete agreement, these negotiations necessarily being secret and (3) a full statement of position once final agreement had been reached.

5. Minister for Foreign Affairs further stated that in view of Turkish Government once agreement had been reached between two Governments there would result an alliance which should be ratified and published. Turkish Government suggested fifteen years as period of duration and would be glad to know views of His Majesty's Government as to this.

Repeated to Paris, Rome, Bucharest, Warsaw, Athens, Sofia, Belgrade and Moscow.

¹ No. 260.

² No. 219.

³ The text is here uncertain.

⁴ Not printed. See No. 190, note 1.

No. 272

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 24, 9.15 a.m.)
No. 125 Telegraphic [C 5780/19/18]

WARSAW, April 23, 1939, 10.35 p.m.

Berlin telegram No. 317¹ last paragraph.

I asked Minister for Foreign Affairs whether any suggestion has been made by Germany regarding Slovakia. M. Beck said that during conversations with M. Gafencu in Berlin it had been vaguely suggested that there might be a guarantee for Slovakia by Germany, Poland and Hungary but no concrete proposal of any kind had been made here on the subject.

Repeated to Berlin.

¹ No. 254.

No. 273

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 24, 9.15 a.m.)
No. 127 Telegraphic [C 5816/1110/55]

WARSAW, April 23, 1939, 10.37 p.m.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs tentatively asked me today whether His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom could entertain the idea of a British loan to Poland for military purposes. He pointed out that Polish military forces at present mobilised were fully equipped and prepared for a campaign but that Polish reserves of man-power were such that it would be possible to put a far larger force into the field if it were possible adequately to equip them. Money was badly needed to increase reserves of necessary raw materials. The Polish Government did not wish to deal with this matter commercially and thought it preferable to ask His Majesty's Government whether in principle this idea of financial assistance could be entertained. He felt that it was unnecessary to go into details until question of principle had been decided.

In this connexion please see my letter to Sir A. Cadogan of April 22¹ which should reach you by bag on April 27.

¹ No. 266.

No. 274

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 24, 9.30 a.m.)
No. 126 Telegraphic [C 5926/54/18]

WARSAW, April 23, 1939, 10.38 p.m.

My telegram No. 122.¹

M. Beck asked me to come and see him today in order to explain to me the exact situation as regards Danzig. He gave a long summary of the events of

¹ No. 263.

the last few months in this matter which I need not convey to you. He then expressed view that attitude of German Government had undoubtedly stiffened since Herr von Ribbentrop became Minister for Foreign Affairs. Herr Hitler had till then regarded Danzig as a provincial town which could not trouble fundamental relations between Germany and Poland. Since, however, Herr von Ribbentrop had acquired such influence with the Führer the demand for annexation had been made with ever increasing insistence.

M. Beck confirmed that a month ago Herr von Ribbentrop put forward proposals for annexation of Danzig, a corridor across the Corridor and a change in attitude of Poland as regards Russia. Herr von Ribbentrop made only a vague allusion to last point but his agents had since given Polish Embassy in Berlin to understand that Herr von Ribbentrop wished Poland to join Germany in a crusade against Russia in order to further his grandiose and insatiable ambitions. Poland was to be entirely separated in this way from western Powers.

M. Beck had with approval of his Government immediately refused to have anything to do with any anti-Comintern combination. As regards Danzig he had instructed the Polish Ambassador to reply that Poland could not consider annexation to the Reich but was prepared to discuss a modification of Statute for the Free City with perhaps a German-Polish guarantee. As regards the Corridor he was prepared to give greater facilities for German communications without, however, any extra-territoriality. No reply had yet been received from the German Government to these Polish suggestions and M. Beck is awaiting return of German Ambassador who, he presumes, will bring some answer from Berlin. M. Beck pointed out that these conversations in Berlin preceded Prime Minister's declaration and since then there had been no change in Polish attitude. It was, therefore, a lie on the part of Herr Hitler to pretend that Polish attitude had been stiffened by British guarantee. When I suggested to M. Beck that it might be difficult to convince public opinion in England and elsewhere that this was so he said that he had no objection to your replying to a question in Parliament to this effect.

He said that while he had no intention of adopting an obstructive attitude it was impossible for Poland to agree to any unilateral solution of the Danzig question and if Germany attempted any *coup de main* or anything of the kind it would mean war.²

Repeated to Berlin and Danzig.

² For a minute of May 1 by Mr. Strang with regard to this telegram, see No. 326.

No. 275

Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 28)

No. 475 [C 6118/53/18]

BERLIN, April 23, 1939

My Lord,

Herr Hitler celebrated his fiftieth birthday in Berlin on the 20th April with pomp and splendour. In previous years the event has always been one for

celebrations on an extensive scale, but on this occasion the German Government, no doubt for reasons of internal propaganda and in order to impress the whole world with German power and strength, particularly at this psychological juncture in Germany's history, exerted every possible effort to make the festivities more imposing and grandiose than had ever been previously witnessed. The extravagant decoration of the streets with flags, bunting, pylons surmounted by golden eagles wearing the swastika badge, and flood-lighting from the Unter den Linden to the Adolf Hitler Platz at the end of the newly constructed east-west axis, a distance of approximately 5 miles, created a spectacle designed to impress the public and made it clear that no labour and expense had been spared in order to make the occasion worthy of the Third Reich. The complicated organisation of the festivities was elaborated with typical German precision, and the whole programme appears to have been carried out without hitch or incident.

2. The celebrations began on the afternoon of the 19th April and continued, as far as the foreign guests were concerned, until the 22nd April. Apart from the reception by Herr Hitler of representatives of various military and party organisations, a tattoo and a torchlight parade in front of the Reichskanzlei, the important event on the 19th April was the opening of the east-west axis from the Brandenburger Tor to the Adolf Hitler Platz by Herr Hitler in person. For many weeks feverish preparations were being made to prepare this arterial road for inauguration on the appointed day. To understand the extent of this achievement in the interests of the glorification of the capital, it is only necessary to remember that the work has, amongst other things, necessitated the bodily removal of the 1864-70 Victory Memorial ('Siegessäule') from opposite the Reichstag to a central position in the avenue, and the doubling of this access to Berlin from the west in all its length, with all the manifold difficulties therein involved. The ceremony took the form of a solemn procession of cars proceeding majestically along the east-west axis, which had been illuminated to celebrate the occasion. Herr Hitler led this impressive array standing up in his car with arm outstretched in reply to the acclamations of the populace. He was followed in succeeding cars by the members of the Government, foreign guests, German officials and representatives of the press. On the following morning, after the German Government and high military authorities had expressed their congratulations to Herr Hitler, the latter received the Nuncio, who conveyed to him the good wishes of the Diplomatic Body, and at the same time handed to him three silver vases on behalf of individual members as a token of their esteem. Representatives of the vassal States of Bohemia and Moravia and Slovakia, in the persons of the Reich Protector, Freiherr von Neurath, and Dr. Hacha for the former and Dr. Tiso for the latter, were also received in the Reichskanzlei to pay homage to their 'liberator'. Special delegations from Bulgaria and Hungary similarly conveyed congratulatory messages to Herr Hitler. The only other ceremony of interest at the Reichskanzlei was the presentation to the Führer by Gauleiter Forster of an address conferring on him the freedom of the City of Danzig. Gauleiter Forster used the following language: 'My

Leader, in the name of the people of Danzig, I beg formally to hand to you this document together with an expression of the renewed vow to render to you and to the Great German Reich inviolable allegiance and unconditional obedience.'

3. At 11 a.m. began the grand military parade, to which the Heads of Foreign Missions and foreign guests were invited. It was intended by its size to create a devastating impression of Germany's military strength in the minds not only of the German public, but particularly of all the representatives of the States, great and small, who had received invitations to witness the spectacle. For the best part of four hours columns of infantry, cavalry and mechanised troops, to the number of 50,000 approximately, passed the Technical School on the east-west axis in close succession, where Herr Hitler took the salute. A golden chair, upholstered with dark red plush, had been set for him on a dais flanked by two smaller tribunes on a lower level. In the tribune on the right sat Herr von Ribbentrop, proud and resplendent in his full-dress uniform. Next to him was huddled Father Tiso, a stout man in a large bowler hat and flowing black cloak. The tribune on the left was occupied by Freiherr von Neurath, this time in a new quasi-military uniform, booted and spurred. Next to him sat M. Hacha in morning dress. In the intervals between the passage of the various units, Herr Hitler sat on his throne, behind which were four chairs for Field-Marshal Göring, Grand Admiral Raeder, General von Brauchitsch and General Keitel. Father Tiso was noticed to give the Hitler salute on the arrival of the Führer.

4. I will not comment on the technical aspects of the parade, which are set out in the enclosed copy of the Military Attaché's report,¹ but my impression, which is shared by many of my colleagues, is that the effort to stage a dramatic show of power was overdone. The review lasted far too long and the constant duplication induced a feeling of hunger, weariness and boredom. Compared with previous reviews, the strictly controlled crowd of spectators admitted to the stands and to the precincts displayed remarkably feeble enthusiasm. The cheers for Herr Hitler on his arrival were easily drowned by the roar of the escorting aeroplanes, the *claqueurs* who led the customary cries of 'Wir gratulieren'² did not display their usual activity, and of the units which received applause the long-suffering and goose-stepping bands were undoubtedly favoured.

5. As regards the participation of foreign guests at the festivities, it appears that the invitations, which numbered about 150, were issued, in most cases at least, on a personal basis. The British guests were Lord Brocket³ and Major-General Fuller. Neither France nor the United States were represented. The Italian and Spanish representation, as well as that of the friendly States, was on rather a larger scale than in the case of other countries, but on the whole the personal guests from foreign States can hardly be regarded as being highly representative of their countries. I enclose a list of the principal

¹ Not printed.

² i.e. 'Congratulations' (on his birthday).

³ Lord Brocket was Chairman of the Anglo-German Fellowship.

guests.⁴ The programme of entertainment included a reception by Herr Hitler, which I attended, the military parade and a gala performance at the opera on the 20th April, and visits on the following day to the Reichssportfeld and Potsdam, concluding with a dinner by Herr von Ribbentrop in the evening.

6. It cannot be said that the celebrations evoked, as a whole, a large response of popular enthusiasm. This may be due partly to the length of the period over which the celebrations were extended and to the seemingly unnecessary expense involved, and partly to the number of similar spectacles which have been offered to the populace during the last eighteen months. But the press and broadcasting had as usual been brought into action. The 20th April had been prescribed 'a whole holiday' for the children of the State, and woe to anyone who failed to beflag or decorate in accordance with instructions. In the usual fashion workers had been marshalled and conducted to the scene of operations to swell the crowd, and reinforce the *claque*; and yet acclamation by the masses as a whole seemed artificial and apathetic, and not savouring of that enthusiasm which constitutes an essential factor in any nation which may be called upon at a moment's notice to face the prospect of war.

I have, &c.,

GEORGE OGILVIE-FORBES

⁴ Not printed.

No. 276

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora)

No. 135 Telegraphic [R 3176/661/67]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 24, 1939, 7.30 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 158.¹

Point 1. His Majesty's Government are now considering in consultation with French Government lines of reply to Soviet proposal contained in Moscow telegram No. 69.² Subject to views of French Government our preliminary view is that proposal though logically complete takes too little account of practical difficulties and would require a very long time for its negotiation, even were existing difficulties less serious than they are. Main difficulty is attitude of Poland. Rightly or wrongly Polish Government are opposed to entering into any public association with Soviet Union, and His Majesty's Government think it most undesirable to disturb Polish confidence at present time. Attitude of Roumania in this matter is much the same. If, therefore, we are doubtful whether time is ripe for adoption of Soviet proposal, this does not mean that we do not wish Soviet Government to be associated with our efforts, but we prefer the suggestion made in my telegram to Moscow No. 71,³ that Soviet Government should make a declaration in respect of their Western neighbours. If they wish to include Turkey also so much the better.

¹ No. 269.

² No. 201.

³ No. 170.

Point 2. We have as yet no information as to the results of the Italian-Yugoslav meeting at Venice other than that contained in communiqué⁴ and are reluctant to express any views until we hear from His Majesty's Minister at Belgrade who will doubtless repeat to you any information which he is able to obtain and will advise as to how much of that information can safely be passed on to Turkish Government.

Point 3. We have no definite information to suggest that Axis Powers are contemplating an immediate move in any particular direction. Our impression is that they do not desire to become involved in a general conflict, and this is borne out by reports from Germany which show that morally and materially country is not fit for major war. Their policy appears to be to create apprehension in the minds of all their neighbours in order to weaken their morale, and they have no doubt plans for a direct or indirect attack on all or almost all of them. They will no doubt move against the weakest point, especially if they calculate that their action will not provoke a general war. For this reason His Majesty's Government attach great importance to the rapid strengthening by practical methods of the ties of solidarity between all those States who feel themselves threatened.

Repeated to Paris, Rome, Bucharest, Warsaw, Athens, Sofia, Belgrade and Moscow.

⁴ A communiqué, referring to the 'particular cordiality' of Italian-Yugoslav relations, was issued on April 23 after Count Ciano's meeting with M. Cinkar-Markovic at Venice.

No. 277

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 24, 11.0 p.m.)
No. 188 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 5838/3356/18]

PARIS, April 24, 1939

Your telegram No. 153 Saving¹ and your telegram No. 154 Saving.²

Following is summary of French reply handed to me this evening by M. Bonnet.

French Government entirely agree that Russian counter-proposals for pact of mutual assistance between three Governments do not meet needs of situation. They take too little account of political (? objections)³ and their conclusion would be too lengthy. Situation requires that three countries should agree on immediate protection against possible aggression against States most threatened. This immediate result once attained could serve as a base for wider agreement.

Extremely precise and certain information which has reached French Government shows that such an agreement will only be possible on two conditions.

(a) The agreement must only mention mutual and reciprocal engagements of assistance between the three Governments without naming any other State. French Government have positive information that any public stipulation of assistance direct or indirect by Russia to Poland would provoke

¹ No. 246.

² No. 247.

³ The text is here uncertain.

reaction from Polish Government which would risk compromising object of project. French Government knows from direct source that objections of Polish Government even extend to unilateral declaration by Soviet Government of direct or indirect assistance in any circumstances by Russia to Poland. It is impossible not to take account of this feeling. Formula proposed to Soviet Government must therefore be in terms wide enough not to indicate specifically such or such a country, and precise enough to apply nevertheless to most pressing and probable emergencies.

(b) French Government are also assured that adherence of Soviet Government to immediate agreement proposed can only be secured in so far as it receives assurance that if assistance asked of it exposed Russia to an attack by Germany, France and Great Britain would come to her help. The Russian Government has made this a *sine qua non*. French Government do not therefore consider it possible to retain and support in Moscow the British suggestion for Russian unilateral declaration of assistance parallel to French and British declarations but with no guarantee or obligation of direct or indirect assistance between the three Governments. The only solution lies in formula by which France and Great Britain would guarantee Russia against consequences of assistance asked of her.

French Government therefore propose Tripartite Agreement on following general lines:

If France and Great Britain found themselves at war with Germany as result of executing engagements taken by them to prevent all changes by force of *status quo* in Central or Eastern Europe, Russia would immediately assist them.

If as result of the help given by Russia to France and Great Britain in above conditions Russia found herself at war with Germany, they would immediately assist her.

The three Governments will concert without delay nature, in both cases, of this assistance and will take all steps to assure its full efficacy.

French Government would be grateful for very early observations.

Full text sent by bag tonight.⁴

⁴ See No. 280.

No. 278

Visit of the Roumanian Foreign Minister, April 23-26, 1939

RECORD OF CONVERSATIONS¹

[C 6138/3356/18]

First Meeting (in the Secretary of State's Room at the Foreign Office on April 24, at 11 a.m.)

Present:

Lord Halifax (Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs).

Sir A. Cadogan (Permanent Under-Secretary of State).

¹ This record and those in Nos. 279, 285 and 295 were made by the British representatives for the use of His Majesty's Government.

Mr. Ingram (Foreign Office).

Mr. Strang (Foreign Office).

M. Gafencu (Roumanian Minister for Foreign Affairs).

M. Tilea (Roumanian Minister in London).

M. Gafencu's recent Conversations with Turkish, Polish and German Governments.

M. Gafencu suggested that he might start by giving an account of the conversations he had recently had with the Turkish Foreign Minister, with the Polish Foreign Minister, and with Herr Hitler and others in Berlin. He had been authorised by his Government to inform Lord Halifax and M. Bonnet of what had passed, and he begged that his report might be kept secret.

Conversations with the Turkish Foreign Minister.

M. Gafencu said that he had gone to Istanbul at Easter to find out whether Roumania could count on the absolute support of Turkey. He had first thought of making contact with representatives of all the members of the Balkan Entente (of which he was at present President), but since the Yugoslavs would probably not have sent a representative to Istanbul, he decided to see the Turkish Minister alone.

He had spent two days in Istanbul. A *procès-verbal* of the proceedings had been signed, and there had been added to this signed document certain notes, in terms agreed upon by the Turkish Foreign Minister and himself. The Turkish Ambassador in London had been fully informed of the contents of these documents.

In the signed *procès-verbal* the two Governments took note of the fact that there were signs that an attempt was being made to establish domination in Europe, which would, in particular, constitute a menace for Eastern and South-Eastern Europe. They also took note of the fact that resistance to this attempt at domination was growing. They recorded that the Roumanian Foreign Minister had informed the Turkish Foreign Minister of what had passed between himself and the British and French Governments, while the Turkish Foreign Minister, in his turn, informed the Roumanian Foreign Minister of his conversations with the Bulgarian Government.

The notes appended to this *procès-verbal* contained seven points, of which the purport was generally as follows:—

- (1) The Turkish and Roumanian Governments would make every effort to reinforce the Balkan Entente and to increase its efficacy in action. They would pursue with regard to Bulgaria a benevolent and friendly policy in the spirit of the Salonika Agreement.² The two Governments, together with their friends and allies, would invite Bulgaria to collaborate with the members of the Balkan Entente, in the economic and cultural sphere and in the sphere of communications,

² The reference appears to be to the Graeco-Yugoslav Agreement concerning a free zone and transit rights at Salonika, printed in *British and Foreign State Papers*, Vol. 118, p. 599.

in order to strengthen their common interests. (M. Gafencu said that he had invited the Bulgarian Government to send a representative to Bucharest on the 17th May to the Economic Conference of the Balkan Entente.)³

- (2) The two States would pursue a prudent policy and avoid all unnecessary provocation, and endeavour to obtain guarantees from the Great Powers, in order to secure peace and preserve their independence.
- (3) If events should impose on Roumania or Turkey, or on both, or on the members of the Balkan Entente as a whole, the necessity of making a choice or taking up a definite position as between the groups of Powers which were now face to face, it was understood that Roumania and Turkey would act in common, and would insist that their allies of the Balkan Entente should join the group which was uniting and organising itself with the object of creating common resistance to tendencies directed towards domination which threatened their independence and security. (M. Gafencu said that this was, of course, the vital point in the arrangement, and he begged that we should not make any disclosure of it.)
- (4) If, in the circumstances foreshadowed in Point (3), Roumania were obliged to give to her treaty of alliance with Poland the complete and general interpretation which results from its terms, or if, still in conformity with Point (3), Turkey found herself obliged to conclude a definite alliance with a third Power, and if by reason of this one of the two States were drawn into a conflict, the other would give to the Balkan Pact its widest interpretation, that is to say, the obligation of assistance would operate against any hostile intervention on the part of a Balkan State.
- (5) In a case where, in accordance with Point (3), Roumania was forced to undertake military action, and if Turkey were to remain either temporarily or permanently outside the conflict, it was understood that Turkey would maintain a benevolent and friendly neutrality. (M. Gafencu explained that this meant that Turkey would not make use of her right of inspection of ships passing through the Straits and carrying help to Roumania.)
- (6) In any conversations that might take place with the Great Powers for the organisation of common resistance, Roumania and Turkey would try to obtain all necessary details with the object of securing effective military assistance (troops, material, arms, munitions, vessels of war, aircraft) so that their participation might contribute effectively to the final success.
- (7) Roumania and Turkey would keep each other informed of any proposals made to them on this subject by the Great Powers, and of any negotiations they might pursue with the Great Powers, and they

³ The Economic Committee of the Balkan Entente met at Bucharest, May 17-27. No Bulgarian representative took part.

would consult each other in all circumstances. If necessary, they would supplement their diplomatic contacts by military contacts for the purpose of co-ordinating measures of military defence.

M. Gafencu explained that the general purpose of Roumania and Turkey was to try and save peace in Eastern Europe. If this should prove impossible, then both Powers would join the same group, and that group would have to be the group which was opposed to domination in Europe.

Conversations with the Polish Foreign Minister.

M. Gafencu said that M. Beck had told him that Lord Halifax had spoken to him of the desirability of extending the Polish-Roumanian Treaty so as to cover an attack from the west as well as from the east.

Lord Halifax said the arrangement which he had made with Colonel Beck was that the latter should have discussions with M. Gafencu before he answered our question, that question being whether Poland would support Roumania in the event of an attack on Roumania from the west. M. Beck's answer had been that he must first discuss this question with his ally before giving a reply.

M. Gafencu said that he had been surprised that M. Beck had not approached the Roumanian Government immediately on his return to Warsaw from London. M. Gafencu had made enquiries in Paris, and had been told that M. Beck had let it be understood that it was for the Roumanians and not for the Poles to initiate this discussion. M. Gafencu knew M. Beck very well and knew what his hesitations were. M. Beck was clearly afraid of being charged with aiming at a policy of encirclement, and therefore preferred that Roumania should take the initiative.

In the Roumanian view it would not have been right to make the Anglo-French guarantee to Roumania depend upon an extension of the Polish-Roumanian Treaty. To have done this would have given M. Beck an opportunity to deny to Roumania the guarantee which they hoped for from Great Britain and France. In the event, the Roumanian Government were delighted to have received a guarantee from Great Britain and France freely and unilaterally, and M. Gafencu took the opportunity of thanking His Majesty's Government in the name of the King of Roumania and the Roumanian Government. This guarantee to Roumania had, he heard, made a great impression in Yugoslavia.

M. Gafencu continued that it was on M. Beck's suggestion that they had met in the train on his journey through Poland to Berlin.

The following was what passed between himself and M. Beck:

M. Beck said that the Polish-Roumanian Alliance had been made against Russia. Historically and politically Russia was the danger; moreover, she was a neighbour. There had been no need to make it against Germany, since Roumania was not a neighbour of Germany. If Hungary attacked Roumania, Roumania could defend herself alone. If Germany attacked Poland,

Roumania would have her hands full on her Hungarian and Bulgarian frontiers and would not be able to send much help to Poland. If there were a general war, both Poland and Roumania would obviously be in the same camp. That being so, what was the point of formally extending a pact if the only result would be to irritate the German Government?

M. Gafencu said that he had replied to M. Beck that he himself had, of course, no interest in a policy of encirclement. It was not his desire to make a new pact against Germany. He did not think this was necessary in view of the terms of the existing Treaty. This Treaty was of the classic type and established a general obligation. By Article 1 both parties undertook reciprocally to respect and maintain against all external aggression their actual territorial integrity and existing political independence. Part of Article 2 provided for special technical arrangements which would lay down the method of execution of the obligation. So far only one such technical arrangement had been made between the two Governments, namely, to meet the case of an attack by Russia. He had explained to M. Beck that the Treaty already was a general Treaty, and that there was no need to create a sensation in the press and elsewhere by making a new one. It was in the interests of both Governments to avoid this. The right thing to do was to give an exact interpretation of the existing Treaty, and this interpretation could only be a wide one. At some appropriate stage later on their two Governments could instruct their soldiers to make arrangements for other hypotheses, such as, for example, a Hungarian attack or a German attack.

M. Gafencu said that M. Beck had replied that he was in agreement with this argument. He agreed with this interpretation, and authorised M. Gafencu so to inform the Governments of the Western Powers. He understood that the Polish Ambassador here had had instructions from Warsaw to make a communication to this effect but that he had wished to wait for M. Gafencu's arrival in London before making it.

Lord Halifax asked whether this meant that M. Beck acknowledged the general interpretation which M. Gafencu had given to Article 1 of the Treaty, and had expressed willingness at the appropriate time to make the same kind of technical arrangements to meet the imaginary case of a Hungarian or German attack as had been made in the imaginary case of a Russian attack.

M. Gafencu agreed that this was so. It was important not to go too fast with M. Beck. They both agreed that the present Treaty was sufficient, and they would keep His Majesty's Government informed of any further steps they might take.

Lord Halifax enquired what was M. Gafencu's impression as to when, and in what conditions, M. Beck would be willing to enter on these technical discussions.

M. Gafencu replied that if M. Beck thought that all was lost with Germany, he would open these discussions. If he thought that something could still be done with Germany, he would not. M. Beck's case *vis-à-vis* Germany was that all that he had done so far was to reinforce an existing arrangement with

France by a new arrangement with Great Britain on similar lines. As the Germans had accepted the Polish-French Treaty, there was no reason why they should not accept the Anglo-Polish arrangement. What he had done with His Majesty's Government was a mere matter of degree and not a change of policy. Moreover, he had avoided any Russian entanglement.

M. Gafencu went on to say that he had taken up M. Beck's statement that if Hungary attacked, Roumania could resist her alone. This might be true, but Hungary would not attack on her own initiative. Germany would foment troubles in Roumania and whet Hungary's territorial ambitions. Germany would wish to lay hands on Roumanian oil so as to be in a better position to make an attack on the Western Powers. He had put it to M. Beck that if Poland did not move in such circumstances, Poland would be encircled and it would be too late for her to do anything. Hungary would march 100 per cent. with Germany, and would think herself well compensated by territorial aggrandisement for the loss of her independence. In M. Gafencu's view, Hungary had already made a definite choice. M. de Kanya, the former Foreign Minister, had not done so, but Count Csaky had made his choice. M. Gafencu said that M. Beck seemed to agree with all this. He did not think it impossible to reach some technical agreement with M. Beck, but it was important not to go too fast. M. Beck would not yet abandon his hope of a *détente* with Germany.

M. Gafencu thought, therefore, that a definite step had been made towards the achievement of what London and Paris wanted.

The account he had given to Lord Halifax of his conversations with M. Beck had been confirmed by the Polish Ambassador in London.

Lord Halifax expressed gratitude for this very helpful review.

Conversations in Berlin.

M. Gafencu said that he had begun his journey to Berlin with considerable apprehension. There had been great tension between the two countries in December last, when the Roumanian Government had suppressed the Iron Guard, an organisation subsidised by Germany, whose programme was to change the internal régime and the foreign policy of Roumania. Its suppression had caused a violent reaction in Germany. Herr Hitler had been incensed, and the party had tried to rush him into action. It was commonly said in Germany that Roumania was the next country to be tackled, and in Sofia and Budapest the claims of Bulgaria and Hungary against Roumania were strongly supported by Germany.

When he became Minister for Foreign Affairs a few weeks ago, his first object had been to create a *détente* with Germany. He had tried to do this in the economic field first, by placing the complementary interests of Roumania and Germany, which were many, on a basis of possible collaboration. The first step had been to get Germany into the European Commission of the Danube.⁴ This was better than having Germany outside trying to destroy the Commission. Then there was the famous Economic Agreement with Ger-

⁴ Germany became a member of the European Commission of the Danube on March 1.

many, in securing which Germany had used, as a means of pressure, the tension existing in Europe. After signature, the German Government had invited him to Berlin and had indicated that the great quarrel was at an end. Before it had been reached they adopted the most menacing attitude, violently attacking King Carol and the Roumanian Government. He had been reluctant to go to Germany at that time, but had subsequently agreed to go, not for Herr Hitler's birthday as the German Government wished, but two days before. He had also wished to combine his visit to Berlin with visits to London and Paris. He was also anxious to secure the British and French guarantee before he arrived in Berlin.

Roumania regarded the guarantees by Great Britain and France as an important element in the situation, and as marking the presence of Great Britain and France in Eastern Europe. This was important in time of peace as well as in time of war, since it established equilibrium in Europe. The British declaration about Roumania had had a great effect in Budapest and Sofia.

M. Gafencu said that, to his astonishment, the conversations in Berlin had proceeded quietly on normal lines. There had been no threats; he was asked for no special explanations, and was not pressed to give any undertakings. Herr Hitler and Herr von Ribbentrop had been courteous and cordial. Field-Marshal Göring, however, who had just returned from Italy, and had not been in touch with his colleagues, took rather a different line and expressed astonishment that Roumania had accepted guarantees from Great Britain and France. He had asked M. Gafencu how Great Britain and France could help Roumania. M. Gafencu had replied that he could not think who it was that was likely to attack Roumania. Hungary was not in a position to do so, and if Russia did, Germany would no doubt help Roumania. Field-Marshal Göring had, with some embarrassment, agreed that this was so. It was true that no one would think of attacking Roumania, but all the same the policy of encirclement might be a dangerous one for Roumania to pursue. To this M. Gafencu replied that there was indeed encirclement, but no policy of encirclement. Governments rightly hesitated to try to encircle Germany, but their peoples were more courageous. What there was, was a psychological encirclement. German ambitions were unlimited and the principles on which German policy was based filled people with alarm; and peoples felt it necessary to defend themselves. This was as true of the Yugoslav people as it was, for example, of the Turkish people. He had told the Field-Marshal that when the German economic experts had come to Bucharest 90 per cent. of the Roumanian people wanted an agreement with Germany. When, however, he had signed that Agreement, he had no one at all behind him, and the reason was plain. Germany had just occupied Bohemia and that had transformed the sentiment of the people as regards Germany.

M. Gafencu said that he had the impression that Field-Marshal Göring had rather liked being spoken to in that way, especially when M. Gafencu had pointed out that, though he had been a diplomat only a few weeks, he had been a soldier for many years.

His interview with Herr Hitler had lasted one and a half hours, and no doubt Herr Hitler intended that what he had said should be passed on to His Majesty's Government.

Hitler began speaking quietly and then, after a time, had become excited, in the usual way. He behaved like a force of nature. He was at the same time very human and tried to put his points clearly and simply. There was no doubt that his remarks had been well prepared, since Herr von Ribbentrop had taken three hours to say the same kind of thing to M. Gafencu before his interview with Herr Hitler.

Herr Hitler said that his whole struggle had been directed towards the destruction of the Versailles Treaty. Most of this task had been achieved, but there were still more things to be done. In answer to M. Gafencu's observation that Germany's principles of conduct seemed to admit of no limitation, Herr Hitler observed that he had strictly limited his action in a number of ways. He had limited it by the Naval Agreement with Great Britain, by the abandonment of Alsace-Lorraine to France,⁵ by the abandonment of the South Tyrol to Italy,⁶ and by the abandonment of the Germans in Yugoslavia and Roumania. He said that little States had suspected him of aggressive designs. He gave M. Gafencu his word of honour that he had no intentions whatever of attacking Belgium or Holland or Switzerland, either as pledges in time of peace or to enlarge his front in time of war. What he wanted was his own colonies and not Belgian or Dutch colonies, and he was determined to get them. There was no need for him to widen his front in case of war. The best policy was to attack the existing front. There was no front, however narrow, that could not be pierced by modern machines of war. He had no intention of supporting Hungary against Roumania nor had he any claims against Roumania. He had told the Hungarian Foreign Minister that the Germans in Roumania were quite happy to be Roumanian subjects and wished to remain so. The same was true of the Germans in Yugoslavia.

Herr Hitler had been somewhat contemptuous about the Hungarians. He said that Germany had helped them in 1914 and had received no help from them. The Austro-Hungarian ultimatum to Serbia had been a foolish act. He himself would never have done anything so unwise. What he would have done would have been to propose the partition of the Austro-Hungarian Empire on a sound ethnographical basis.

Herr Hitler had been very angry with England. He said that England wanted to prevent Germany from developing, both politically and economically, and to hinder her from feeding herself and to bar Germany's vital aspirations. He denied that Roosevelt spoke with the voice of America, and regarded him as a naïve and ridiculous person, encircled by British diplomacy. The policy of France, too, was under British direction. France really wanted appeasement, but was not allowed to pursue her own policy. He could not understand what had come over M. Daladier. It was all England's fault. If England wanted war, she could have it, and it would be such a war

⁵ i.e. by the Franco-German Declaration of December 6, 1938.

⁶ i.e. in Herr Hitler's speech at Rome on May 7, 1938.

as had never been seen before. Not only had Germany the strongest army in the world, but her technicians and physicists had not been idle. Things would be seen that had never been seen before. German towns would no doubt not escape, but on the other side not a single town would continue to exist; and after all no one would profit from this disaster except Moscow.

M. Gafencu said that he did not think Herr Hitler wanted war. He did not in his heart of hearts dislike England. He said he had been accused of being Anglophile, and he did not deny the accusation. He wished for friendship with the British Empire, but on a basis of equality, which he thought was necessary for the maintenance of white civilisation, but England must understand that Greater Germany had equal rights in any compromise that was reached. The trouble was, M. Gafencu said, that German ambitions had no limit. When they said they wanted a compromise, what they really wanted was to divide the Empire of the world, and they might not even stop there.

In M. Gafencu's view the danger was not so much that there was a desire for war, but that existing methods might lead to war. War might arise out of some error of psychology, such, for example, as a tendency to under-estimate the power and will of Great Britain and France to resist.

Lord Halifax said he hoped that M. Gafencu would give him a clear indication, if Herr Hitler had done so, of what exactly Herr Hitler thought His Majesty's Government were doing that was wrong.

M. Gafencu said he thought that what Herr Hitler objected to was the British policy of equilibrium in Europe. Herr Hitler's own policy might be summed up in the words: 'The world for England; Europe for me.'

M. Gafencu thought that German aims admitted of no limit. Any compromise they might reach was apt to be a first step only. The absorption of the Sudeten country had been followed by the occupation of what was left of Bohemia and Moravia. In the same way any general compromise would only be a first step towards world domination.

Herr Hitler, speaking of Roumania, had said that the economies of Germany and Roumania were complementary. Roumania could supply food and receive machinery in return. The two countries could therefore make an equal commercial treaty. If foreigners interfered in this matter, their only object could be to prevent Germany from feeding herself.

M. Gafencu explained that Roumania's interest was to have a broad economic agreement with Germany, but to keep a margin in reserve so as to set a limit to Germany's economic influence. He had explained this to Sir F. Leith-Ross when he had seen him in Brussels. Roumania did not wish to fall into the closed economy of Germany. It was not in the interests of Roumania and, indeed, it was not in the general interests that the area of closed economy should be extended.

Reverting to his interview with Herr Hitler, M. Gafencu said that Herr Hitler was also incensed against Poland. Herr Hitler said that he had always

wanted to maintain the agreement reached with Pilsudski, even though the Corridor was absurd and the German minorities were atrociously treated. After the occupation of Bohemia, he had made to Poland an offer which, for generosity, was unique in history. What he proposed was that Danzig should be returned to Germany; that a special economic régime should be established by which Danzig, as a port and as a centre of communications, should remain within Polish economy. Germany would have right of passage through the Corridor and would guarantee the Polish frontier, including the Corridor and Gdynia, for twenty-five years. Finally, he had offered Poland a tripartite (German-Polish-Hungarian) régime for Slovakia.

Herr Hitler said that M. Beck had answered this offer by going to London, and that he would never make so generous an offer again.

Both Herr Hitler and Herr von Ribbentrop had said that the Danzig question must be settled. M. Gafencu was certain that in his speech on the 28th April Herr Hitler would speak of Danzig and the colonies. He had spoken a great deal of the colonies to M. Gafencu. Field-Marshal Göring also had been strong on the point. He said that he had been astonished in Libya to see what a totalitarian State could do, not only in the way of economic development, but also in the way of transplanting a population. The Field-Marshal had said that both Germany and Italy needed colonies, and would never give up their claim.

M. Gafencu said that Herr Hitler had reproached Roumania for calling upon Great Britain and France to fight for her. M. Gafencu said that Roumania had not done this; she was determined to fight for her own independence. Herr Hitler had taken this remark well. M. Gafencu's impression was that what made Herr Hitler angry was not so much the things that other people said to him as the ideas that grew in his own mind.

Lord Halifax enquired whether M. Gafencu had gained the impression that Herr Hitler blamed His Majesty's Government for M. Beck's attitude.

M. Gafencu replied that this was perhaps so. He had an impression that Herr Hitler was angry because he had thought that, after Munich, Great Britain and France would not stay in Eastern Europe. Now he found that they were there again and that the idea of European equilibrium, which he thought he had destroyed, had raised its head again.

M. Gafencu also had the impression that Herr Hitler was angry because he wanted to be angry so that he could make demands, e.g. for colonies, in his speech. He would make his anger a pretext for demanding some new 'compromise'.

M. Gafencu thought that the best course would be to speak to Herr Hitler in the same way as he spoke to others. It was important not to let Germany put forward new demands or new claims on the basis of abstract justice. Such a claim could be advanced for the incorporation of Danzig. The thing to do would be to say quite clearly to Herr Hitler that, no matter what his claims might be, these could not be considered until Germany had quitted Prague, where she had no right to be. The whole world knew that by going to Prague,

Herr Hitler had made a mistake and had caused every nation in the world to feel itself threatened.

There was little doubt that Herr Hitler would come forward in his speech with new arguments based on his conception of justice. Danzig, he would say, was Germany [sic]; the Corridor, he would say, cut the German people in two; and similarly the colonies he wanted were German colonies. In everything he said there was likely to be at any rate the appearance of law. What other Governments ought to do was to use arguments which would strike the imagination as Herr Hitler's arguments did.

Lord Halifax observed that what made it difficult to deal with Herr Hitler and the German Government was that, however much they might speak of compromise, they had little notion of compromise except on their own terms. What made the problem intractable was that the Germans were apt to think things were everybody's fault but their own, like the soldier who was the only man in his company to be in step.

Did M. Gafencu think it likely that M. Beck would be able to come to an agreement with Germany about Danzig? M. Beck had told Lord Halifax that he would not accept an imposed solution or a *fait accompli*, but was prepared to come to an arrangement with Germany by which the population of Danzig might enjoy all the rights of self-government within an international framework. M. Beck wished to preserve Danzig's international position and not to have it incorporated in the Reich. In the same way, while he could not agree to an extra-territorial motor road, he was prepared to make every concession in the way of transit facilities. Lord Halifax feared, however, that this would not be enough for Herr Hitler.

M. Gafencu said that M. Beck had told him that he had a margin in his negotiations with Germany. M. Gafencu had asked him what the situation would be if Germany occupied Danzig. M. Beck had replied that that would mean war. From what had been said to him in Berlin, it seemed to M. Gafencu that the German claims went well beyond M. Beck's margin. In Berlin the situation was thought to be dangerous. The Italian Ambassador had asked him to use his influence with M. Beck and to persuade him that the Germans were really in earnest. He had told this to the Polish Ambassador in Berlin and asked him to pass it on to M. Beck. M. Beck and Marshal Smigly-Rydz were, he feared, rather intransigent in this matter.

M. Gafencu said he still thought that the important thing to do was to destroy Germany's moral position by saying that we could discuss nothing until she quitted Prague. If any concessions were made to Germany, it should be in return for something.

Lord Halifax enquired whether, as a matter of practical politics, M. Gafencu thought that it was likely that the Germans would restore Prague.

M. Gafencu replied that perhaps they might establish some new kind of régime. The rest of the world must not give anything more to Germany without compensation. The Munich settlement might have been a marvellous

thing; but the trouble was that there was no compensation. There had been an agreement under the shadow of a victory, instead of an agreement under the shadow of an act of compensation. In his view everything should be done to save peace and keep the door open for negotiation; but peace must be based on compensation.

Sir A. Cadogan said he saw the force of this argument, but the restoration of Prague would hardly be a compensation to Poland.

M. Gafencu said that, on the other hand, Slovakia would be a compensation. The Poles felt that they were being encircled by German influence in Slovakia. Herr Hitler had told M. Gafencu that he had proposed to M. Beck a special tripartite régime for Slovakia (in which Germany, Poland and Hungary would participate), and that this would be the means of reducing tension in Central Europe.

M. Gafencu did not think it impossible that there might be some change of régime both at Prague and in Slovakia.

Lord Halifax assumed that if there were anything to be made of this idea, it would have to go through the machinery of free conversations, or a conference. He doubted whether Herr Hitler would accept this.

M. Gafencu said that his impression was that Herr Hitler did not want war. He wanted a new success; in fact, he must have a new success, both for internal reasons and for reasons of temperament. He had insisted half a dozen times to M. Gafencu that all that he had achieved had been achieved without shedding blood.

Sir A. Cadogan said that men who must have successes were very dangerous.

M. Gafencu repeated that for that reason he thought it essential to introduce the principle of compensation. Abstract justice was all very well, but practical justice was better. If the Germans were told that they must quit Prague before anything else could be discussed, the whole world would understand.

Conversations between His Majesty's Government and the Turkish Government.

M. Gafencu asked what progress His Majesty's Government had made in their conversations with the Turkish Government.

Lord Halifax explained that the main purpose His Majesty's Government had in view was to build up, and to help in building up Balkan unity and strength. Turkey was of very great importance from this point of view. His Majesty's Government had approached the Turkish Government and asked them whether they were prepared to take part in this. It was also explained to them that if there were an act of aggression by one of the Axis Powers either in Western Europe or in Eastern Europe or in South-Eastern Europe, the problem was a single one. It must be assumed that the two Axis Powers would act together. The consequence was that wherever war started it was

likely to be a general war. In that event His Majesty's Government said that they would like to know whether they could count on the Turkish Government. The Turkish reply was, in effect, that they accepted this point of view. The most useful thing they could do, they thought, would be to continue to use their influence in the interests of Balkan unity. In any general conflict, they had no doubt that they would be with us, and they gave a general assurance to this effect. They were rather uncertain whether, as a matter of procedure, it was wise to try to do too much at once. In any event, they would continue their efforts in the Balkans. They would also consider making a public statement to the effect that they would preserve their neutrality unless there were an act of aggression by the Axis Powers in the Mediterranean or the Balkans. His Majesty's Government had replied that they thought this was a wise attitude, but that they would wish for something a little clearer. There might well be an act of aggression, not in the Balkans or the Mediterranean, but elsewhere, and that a general war might arise started by an act of aggression elsewhere. His Majesty's Government therefore suggested that instead of speaking of an act of aggression in the Balkans and Mediterranean, it might be better to speak of an act of aggression leading to war in the Balkans and Mediterranean. They were still awaiting the considered reply of the Turkish Government to this suggestion. The Turkish Government had also suggested exchanges of military information, and His Majesty's Government had replied that they were willing. One of the principal points to be covered would be Turkish action in regard to the Straits.

The broad position between His Majesty's Government and the Turkish Government (and the French position was the same), was that the general outlook of the two Governments was the same and the Turkish attitude had been helpful. They wished, of course, to avoid damaging their relations with Germany and Italy by doing anything provocative, but they wished to play their part in their own Balkan region and in the Mediterranean, and there was little doubt that if there was general war they would be in the same camp as ourselves.

Bulgaria.

Mr. Ingram said that he thought that the Turkish Government were a little in the dark as to the attitude of the Roumanian Government towards the proposals which the Turkish Government had made to the Roumanian Government about bringing Bulgaria into the Balkan Entente.

M. Gafencu said that the problem was how to strengthen the Balkan Entente. It was desirable to get Bulgaria in, but how was this to be done? Bulgaria had certain territorial claims which affected Roumania and Greece. The Roumanian Government had given an answer to the Turkish Government, though the Turkish Government had not pressed the Roumanian Government very hard. M. Gafencu's view was that to make territorial concessions at the present moment would weaken the resistance to domination which was growing up in Eastern Europe. One of the results would be to

provoke Hungarian demands. Roumania would find herself in the same position as Czecho-Slovakia. It was disastrous for a country to lose its frontiers during a period of tension. It was impossible for Roumania to consent to weaken herself so much as to deprive herself of the power to resist. If this happened, the Balkans were lost, since Roumania was in a key position.

Roumania was ready to make an arrangement with Bulgaria about communications and the treatment of minorities; but it would be fatal to make any territorial concessions now. If territorial changes were made for the benefit of Hungary the results would be that for every two Hungarians who returned to Hungary, ten Roumanians and one German would pass into foreign sovereignty with them. The case of Bulgaria was less difficult. There was in the Southern Dobrudja an area where the Bulgarian population was fairly compact. In other circumstances, some concession might be considered. It would be too dangerous now. The Greek Government took the same view.

Lord Halifax quite understood the danger of raising territorial questions in present circumstances. It would be desirable, if possible, to attach Bulgaria to the Balkan Entente by making concessions in the sphere of economics and communications. But if Bulgaria were invited to join the Balkan Entente, would Bulgaria not be likely to make a condition about the Dobrudja?

M. Gafencu explained that the Balkan Entente was based on the idea of complete territorial integrity. The Turkish Government had apparently had it in mind to try to reinforce the external frontiers of the Entente, but to leave all questions connected with internal frontiers in suspense. It would be dangerous for Roumania at the present moment to say anything whatever about territorial concessions to Bulgaria. One result would be that Bulgaria would then press her claims against Yugoslavia and Greece. Roumania had to be careful (1) not to weaken her own power of resistance, and (2) not to weaken the Balkan Entente by admitting a State who, having joined the Entente, might play the game of Berlin and Rome. The best line of approach to Bulgaria was through economic questions; and it was for that reason that he had invited a Bulgarian representative to the Economic Conference which opened at Bucharest on the 17th May. His Majesty's Government could help if they would let it be known that they thought it a good thing for Bulgaria to send a representative. He did not wish to close the door to an entente with Bulgaria. The Balkan States were all different each from the other, yet they were compelled by history and geography to collaborate. The important thing was to promote the idea of Balkan unity.

M. Gafencu then referred to an idea which he had ventilated in London six months earlier, namely, the construction of a north-south road from Warsaw through Bucharest and Sofia to Salonika. This would help to create a community of interest among the Eastern European States. Poland and Bulgaria already showed a tendency to draw together. The proposed road would not pass through German territory, and since it would reach the sea at Salonika, it would open up Eastern Europe to the maritime Powers. There was at present no bridge across the Danube between Roumania and Bulgaria.

The Polish and Roumanian Governments were both studying the project, and M. Gafencu had mentioned it to Sir F. Leith-Ross.

Lord Halifax said he gathered from what M. Gafencu had said that the Roumanian Government had not closed their eyes to the possibility of some political arrangement with Bulgaria, but they felt that, before this question could be properly examined, there must be good progress towards Balkan unity. They considered the best initial approach was in the economic field, and they had to be assured that Bulgaria would not play a double game.

M. Gafencu said he was worried about Yugoslavia. If Belgrade turned to Rome and Berlin, the Balkan combination would be lost. His Majesty's Government had great influence with the Prince Regent; could he not be invited to London?

(The meeting adjourned at 12.30 p.m.)

No. 279

Visit of the Roumanian Foreign Minister, April 23–26, 1939

RECORD OF CONVERSATIONS

[C 6138/3356/18]

*Second Meeting (in the Prime Minister's Room at the House of Commons,
on April 24, at 4 p.m.)*

Present: as in No. 278 with the addition of Mr. Chamberlain (Prime Minister).

Conversations in Berlin: Roumanian–German relations.

The Prime Minister said that M. Gafencu had told him during luncheon of his conversations in Germany. Had he anything more to say on the subject?

M. Gafencu then outlined briefly the purport of his conversations with Herr Hitler, Herr von Ribbentrop and Field-Marshal Göring, as recounted to Lord Halifax that morning. The following new points emerged:

Herr Hitler told him that he thought the Germans had made a mistake in 1914 in going through Belgium in order to widen their front. Herr Hitler also said that he had told Count Csaky that the Germans in Roumania were better off there than they would be if they were transferred to Hungary, and he had no intention of supporting Hungarian claims against Roumania. M. Gafencu said that, of course, when Herr Hitler said this he had in mind a friendly Roumania. Herr Hitler had also said that he had nothing to say against an Anglo-French guarantee to Roumania; but he had added that, if this were linked up with Russia, the position would be changed. In Herr Hitler's view, Great Britain, France and Germany, whatever their differences, had a common interest in saving Europe. The Soviet Union was a danger, not only to Germany but to Europe as a whole.

The Prime Minister said he gathered therefore that Herr Hitler's dislike and fear of Russia had not diminished.

M. Gafencu said this was so. It was, of course, possible that Herr Hitler had used this language about Russia as a means of pressure upon himself. He had intimated that, if the Roumanian Government based their system upon Russia, Germany would have to regard this as an unfriendly attitude towards herself. Herr Hitler also indicated that the Polish-Roumanian alliance suited his book. It was, in his view, a European alliance which might be useful in stemming the Russian advance.

Field-Marshal Göring had been more categorical about the Russian question, and had seemed to be trying to use the language of intimidation. Herr von Ribbentrop, on the other hand, had been unexpectedly amiable. It was clear to M. Gafencu that Herr Hitler and Herr von Ribbentrop had concerted together the line to be taken in the conversations.

M. Gafencu went on to explain that the Germans had no need to insist on the Russian question with him. He had explained to them that Roumania had, of necessity, to maintain contact with Great Britain and France, but she had never based her security system upon the Soviet Union. He recalled that M. Titulescu had tried to do what M. Benes had done, namely, to base his security system upon Russia, but that this was the cause of M. Titulescu's fall. This was not the policy of the present Roumanian Government, the Roumanian King or the Roumanian people. An agreement with Russia might lead Roumania where she did not want to go. Roumania preferred to confine her political connexions to those States whose conception of peace was the same as her own. This was not so with Soviet Russia.

The Prime Minister asked whether M. Gafencu had given his views about Russia to Mr. Attlee.

M. Gafencu said he had had an opportunity of doing so at some length with Mr. Dalton¹ and Mr. Henderson.² Mr. Dalton had urged the importance of linking up with Soviet Russia for the sake of peace, but M. Gafencu had retorted that the word 'peace' did not always mean the same thing in the minds of those who used it. His own view was that, if war was certain, he would not care who helped him; but if there were a 5 per cent. chance of peace, he did not wish to jeopardise it by associating with a country in whom he had no confidence.

The Prime Minister asked whether there had been any tendency in Berlin to press him further on the economic agreement between Germany and Roumania.

M. Gafencu replied that so far there had been no pressure. They must now wait and see. When the agreement had been signed, a Grand Council had laid down the line on which Roumania would have to stand and resist. The Roumanian-German Economic Agreement was nothing more than a plan of

¹ Mr. Hugh Dalton, M.P. for Bishop Auckland.

² Mr. Arthur Henderson, M.P. for Kingswinford.

collaboration, designed to increase the economic exchanges between the two countries. It was necessary now to wait and see how it would be executed.

M. Gafencu had spoken to Sir F. Leith-Ross about this in Brussels, and had promised that on his arrival in Bucharest he would be informed of the points on which Roumania was determined to resist.

The Agreement was an economic and not a political one, and Roumania wished to make it clear to Germany that she was ready loyally to satisfy Germany's needs under the Agreement on a reciprocal basis. But there were certain limits which must not be passed, otherwise Roumania would slip into the control of the closed economy area. At the same time it would be desirable to make clear that the economic exchanges which Roumania would have with Great Britain and France were not designed to shut Germany out.

When he had seen Sir F. Leith-Ross in Brussels, the latter had spoken of a plan for an international holding company, which would centralise exchanges between W. and E. Europe. Something of this kind was plainly desirable. It was important for the Western Powers to do what they could to maintain Roumania's economic independence, though this should be done on a purely economic, and not on a political, basis. In any event, it was necessary to proceed with great prudence.

Poland.

Mr. Chamberlain asked whether M. Gafencu had the impression that Germany had for the time being decided not to make a further push in the direction of Roumania.

M. Gafencu replied that he did not think the push would be in that direction. The next push would be towards Poland and towards Danzig in particular. There would also be a push for the colonies, probably in concert with the Italians. Germany would risk a great deal if a conflict arose with Poland, since in that event she could not be sure of Italian support. Therefore she would probably run some other hare at the same time in conjunction with the Italians, in order to make sure that the latter came in.

M. Gafencu was convinced that Herr Hitler would speak of Danzig on the 28th April. Herr Hitler had said three times to M. Gafencu that the Danzig question must be settled. Herr von Ribbentrop had also said the same thing.

M. Gafencu repeated to Mr. Chamberlain the account he had given to Lord Halifax at the morning session of Herr Hitler's proposals to Poland about Danzig and the Corridor.

Mr. Chamberlain asked whether Herr Hitler had asked Poland to join the Anti-Comintern Pact.

M. Gafencu did not think so, nor did he think that Poland would join.

Soviet Union.

M. Gafencu said he would be grateful if he could be told about the progress of our negotiations with the Soviet Government. He had had a certain

amount of information from M. Bonnet through the Roumanian Ambassador in Paris. He would be glad if Lord Halifax could supplement this.

Lord Halifax said that His Majesty's Government were sensible of the difficulty of reconciling two points of view, both of which had to be taken into account. On the one hand His Majesty's Government were conscious that in case of trouble it might well be that Roumania and Poland would be glad to have Russian assistance. That being so, it was desirable not to cold-shoulder Soviet Russia too much. His Majesty's Government also had the domestic aspect to consider, since many members of the Opposition considered that if only an agreement could be made with Russia everything would be all right.

On the other hand it was necessary to have regard to what we knew to be the hesitation of Poland and to what we believed to be the hesitation of Roumania.

After the guarantees had been given to Roumania by Great Britain and France an approach was made to the Soviet Government. The difficulties were pointed out to them and it was suggested that the Soviet Government might on their own initiative make a declaration on the lines of a recent speech by Stalin in which he had defined Russian policy as being that of assisting victims of aggression who were willing to defend themselves. Could not the Soviet Government, without asking any questions, say that if Roumania and Poland wanted assistance from the Soviet Government they would be willing to give it? This would be a unilateral declaration made in the same way as our own.

Lord Halifax hoped that this proposal did not embarrass the Roumanian Government.

The Soviet Government had replied by putting forward a detailed scheme which was now being studied. One of the essential elements in this scheme was that France, Great Britain and the Soviet Union should make a definite agreement to give support to all countries lying between the Baltic and Black Seas. No reply had yet been given to this proposal, but it presented great difficulties. If such a proposal were accepted, we should be forcing Poland and Roumania into an embarrassing position.

His Majesty's Government would probably answer the Soviet proposal by saying that something of this kind might be worth considering at a later date, but that in present circumstances it would create difficulties which they were seeking to avoid. We would therefore ask them to reconsider the proposal we had put to them.

M. Gafencu asked whether he could discuss this question with M. Bonnet.

Lord Halifax replied that there would be no objection to this, since our proposed reply had already been submitted to the French Government; but, apart from this, he hoped that M. Gafencu would keep this information confidential.

M. Gafencu said the danger was that, if any large scheme of this kind were elaborated, the German Government would certainly say that Poland and

Roumania could no longer be regarded as friends of Germany. He himself could not trust the Soviet Government. It was true that the Soviet Government would defend Soviet territory; at the same time, their object was still world revolution. It was impossible to be sure which of these two ideas would gain the upper hand. They ought not to be cold-shouldered; but it would be dangerous to give the impression that there was any intimate collaboration with them. They did not use the word 'peace' in the same sense as other Governments of Europe.

M. Gafencu thanked Lord Halifax for the information he had given and agreed with the line His Majesty's Government were taking.

Lord Halifax asked whether it would be embarrassing to M. Gafencu if, when it became necessary to say something in public, he were to say that too close collaboration with the Soviet Government would be embarrassing to Roumania.

M. Gafencu replied that this would give pleasure in Berlin, but it would not be so well received in Moscow. But it ought to be possible to find words which would not do any harm anywhere.

The Prime Minister asked whether it was M. Gafencu's view that open association with the Soviet Union, by Great Britain or Roumania or Poland, would introduce a dangerous element into the situation and might precipitate dangerous action by Germany.

M. Gafencu replied that this was what he feared, and it was a fear of King Carol also. On the other hand, it was dangerous to be at enmity with the Soviet Union. The best thing was not to trust them or to make arrangements with them which might be held to imply that we trusted them.

He suggested that, if His Majesty's Government wished to say something in public about Roumania's attitude towards Russia, they might say that the policy of Roumania was not to lean upon one strong neighbour against the other strong neighbour. The differences between the German and Soviet Governments were based on matters of doctrine which had nothing to do with Roumania. Roumania would not join with Germany against Russia or join the Anti-Comintern Pact; nor would she join with Russia against Germany. The important thing was to have equilibrium in Europe. This was the true significance of the Franco-British guarantee to Poland and Roumania.

Lord Halifax said that it had been suggested to him that Herr Hitler was sincerely concerned about the question of encirclement, and that he would be reassured if it could be said in London that if Germany were attacked by Russia or Poland His Majesty's Government would go to the support of Germany. He did not think that there was much value in this idea.

M. Gafencu agreed.

Yugoslavia.

M. Gafencu said that he hoped to visit Belgrade on his way back. He wondered whether His Majesty's Government could not bring influence to

bear on the Prince Regent, since anything His Majesty's Government might say might be decisive. He had just received a telegram informing him that His Majesty's Minister in Belgrade had reported to the Foreign Office that he had received a formal assurance from the Yugoslav Government that the Yugoslav Government would not allow themselves to be drawn into any combination against Great Britain.

Lord Halifax said that when the Prince Regent had last been in London³ he had begged His Majesty's Government never to believe (no matter what they might hear) that Yugoslavia would follow any policy directed against Great Britain.

He had not yet received any report from His Majesty's Minister in the sense of M. Gafencu's telegram.⁴

M. Gafencu said that perhaps after all nothing very serious had happened in Venice; but if Yugoslavia threw in her lot with Italy, the Balkan Pact was finished. This would be a pity since the Balkan Entente was a useful thing.

He thought there were two possibilities. Perhaps the Italians were thinking of an agreement between Italy, Yugoslavia and Hungary, which, though it might be directed against the Balkan Entente, would equally be designed as a reinsurance against Berlin. On the other hand, Italy might merely be acting as the agent of Germany, facilitating her advance into the Balkans.

Lord Halifax asked what action could be taken to strengthen the attitude of Yugoslavia.

M. Gafencu thought that if His Majesty's Government could give Yugoslavia a guarantee, this might help. Had His Majesty's Government thought that the Yugoslav Government would refuse?

Lord Halifax replied that His Majesty's Government had not approached the Yugoslav Government. They had thought that such an approach might perhaps be embarrassing; but they had deliberately not taken any decision until they had had a chance of talking to M. Gafencu.

M. Gafencu feared that perhaps it was now too late. M. Stoyadinovitch had told him three months ago that Yugoslavia would be with Roumania; but he could not say so in public. M. Gafencu had tried at Easter to organise a meeting of the Balkan Entente at Istanbul, but the Yugoslavs had not been willing to go. That was why he would stop at Belgrade on his way home. He proposed also to visit Rome on the way.

M. Gafencu said that while he was in Brussels he had found that King Leopold was anxious about the international situation, and had wondered whether he and King Carol could not organize a conference of the smaller European countries; the Balkan *bloc*, the Baltic *bloc*, the Scandinavian countries, Belgium and Holland, and perhaps also Spain and Portugal. The conference would be called for economic purposes, but it might also issue an appeal for peace in Europe.

³ In November, 1938.

⁴ No such report was received from H.M. Minister at Belgrade.

M. Gafencu said that he had promised to speak to King Carol on his return. The idea seemed to him a good one, but somewhat risky. Great Britain and France might view it with sympathy, but other Powers would sabotage it. He asked that if any approach was made to His Majesty's Government on the subject they would let him know what they thought.

The Prime Minister enquired whether M. Gafencu did not think that such a step would again be regarded as encirclement.

M. Gafencu concurred, but qualified the encirclement as a peaceful one.

Arms for Roumania.

M. Gafencu said that he wished to ask about the supply of arms to Roumania. This is [*sic ?* was] an important question, since it was desirable that Roumania should be as strong as possible as soon as possible. She had plenty of men and they were imbued with a fine spirit; but Roumania needed to complete her armaments. A list had been submitted to His Majesty's Government together with the request for credits. The sum involved would be about £10 million. He would ask His Majesty's Government to consider this application and give their reply. The question was most important for Roumania. The Polish and Roumanian armies, if well equipped, would be a strong barrier.

Lord Halifax said he thought the position was as follows. The lists had been examined. His Majesty's Government fully realised how desirable it was that everything possible should be done to help to equip the Roumanian army. But at the present moment, when our own forces were being re-equipped, we doubted whether, with the best will in the world, we could immediately give Roumania anything nearly approaching all that she wanted. In some items, covering all three services, we could help. The best thing would perhaps be for the Roumanian Service Attachés to place themselves in contact with our Service Departments and go into the details. He hoped that M. Gafencu would not be too disappointed. For the present, His Majesty's Government could not help very much, but perhaps later on they could help more.

M. Gafencu expressed his disappointment but agreed to this procedure.

(The meeting adjourned at 5 p.m.)

No. 280

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 25)

No. 496 [C 5932/3356/18]

PARIS, April 24, 1939

His Majesty's Ambassador at Paris presents his compliments to His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and, with reference to Foreign Office telegrams Nos. 153¹ and 154², Saving, of the 21st April,

¹ No. 246.

² No. 247.

1939, has the honour to transmit to him a copy of a note from the French Government dated the 24th April respecting the European situation and the Soviet proposal.

ENCLOSURE IN NO. 280

Note from the French Government

L'Aide-Mémoire remis par Sir Eric Phipps au Ministre des Affaires Étrangères le 23 avril et relatif aux contre-propositions russes au sujet de la conclusion d'un pacte de garantie, a été l'objet de la plus sérieuse attention de la part du Gouvernement français. De l'examen approfondi qui en a été fait ainsi que des informations parvenues de différentes sources au Gouvernement français, se dégagent les conclusions suivantes, soumises par la présente note à la particulière considération du Gouvernement britannique :

1. Le Gouvernement français est entièrement d'accord avec le Gouvernement britannique pour estimer que les contre-propositions russes visant à la conclusion d'un accord d'assistance mutuelle conclu pour cinq ou dix ans entre les trois Gouvernements ne répondent pas aux exigences de la situation actuelle. Ces propositions tiennent en effet trop peu de compte des difficultés pratiques existantes et leur mise au point demanderait des négociations trop longues. Les circonstances auxquelles nous avons à faire face demandent que la France, la Grande-Bretagne et la Russie s'entendent en vue de la protection immédiate contre une agression éventuelle des États les plus directement menacés. Ce premier résultat une fois atteint pourra servir de point de départ à la réalisation d'un accord plus étendu. Mais il importe de parer aux problèmes concrets qui se posent d'une manière urgente, avant de rechercher une formule générale s'appliquant aux éventualités plus ou moins probables ou éloignées.

2. Il résulte des indications extrêmement précises et sûres parvenues à la connaissance du Gouvernement français que la conclusion de l'accord ainsi défini dans son objet ne sera possible qu'à deux conditions :

(a) L'accord ne devra faire état que des engagements mutuels et réci-proques d'assistance que la France, la Grande-Bretagne et l'U.R.S.S. prendraient à l'égard les uns des autres sans faire intervenir dans ces prévisions aucun État tiers nommément désigné. Les informations recueillies par le Ministère des Affaires Étrangères établissent en effet, sans laisser place à aucun doute, que toute stipulation publique, impliquant l'éventualité d'une assistance directe ou indirecte de l'U.R.S.S. à la Pologne, provoquerait de la part du Gouvernement polonais des réactions qui risqueraient de compromettre gravement l'objet même poursuivi par l'accord projeté. Cet aspect du problème n'a du reste point échappé au Gouvernement anglais, et l'aide-mémoire de l'Ambassade britannique du 22 avril fait état de la répugnance du Gouvernement polonais à être associé à l'Union soviétique dans un accord politique. Le Gouvernement français sait de source directe que les objections du Gouvernement polonais visent même la prévision, par une déclaration

unilatérale du Gouvernement soviétique, d'une assistance directe ou indirecte de la Russie prêtée, en quelque circonstance que ce soit, à la Pologne. Il paraît impossible au Gouvernement français, sous peine de frapper de stérilité les efforts poursuivis par la France et l'Angleterre pour mener à bonne fin les conversations actuelles, de ne point tenir compte de cet état d'esprit. La formule proposée au Gouvernement de l'U.R.S.S. devra donc être conçue en des termes assez généraux pour ne pas désigner spécifiquement tel ou tel pays, et assez précis pour s'appliquer néanmoins aux éventualités les plus pressantes et les plus probables.

(b) Le Gouvernement français a d'autre part l'assurance que l'adhésion du Gouvernement russe à l'accord immédiat et de circonstance qui lui est proposé ne pourra être acquise que dans la mesure où le Gouvernement russe recevra l'assurance qu'au cas où le concours qui lui est demandé l'exposerait, de la part de l'Allemagne, à une agression déclenchée à l'occasion de cette assistance, la France et la Grande-Bretagne lui assureraient leur concours. Telle paraît, aux yeux du Gouvernement français, la position essentielle qui se dégage des contre-propositions russes remises à Paris et à Londres le 18 avril, et le Gouvernement français estime que le Gouvernement russe fait de cette demande une condition *sine qua non* à la conclusion de tout accord. Il ne lui paraît point possible, dans ces conditions, de retenir plus longtemps et d'appuyer à Moscou la suggestion anglaise d'une déclaration russe unilatérale d'assistance, parallèle aux déclarations publiques faites par la France et l'Angleterre, mais n'entraînant aucune garantie ni aucune obligation d'assistance directe ou indirecte des trois Puissances entre elles. La seule solution qui permette d'aboutir à une conclusion pratique et rapide lui paraît devoir être recherchée dans une formule aux termes de laquelle la France et la Grande-Bretagne s'engageraient à garantir la Russie contre les conséquences de l'assistance qu'elles lui demandent dans telle éventualité définie.

3. En conclusion des observations précédentes, le Gouvernement français estime que l'accord envisagé pourrait intervenir sous la forme d'un accord tripartite dont le texte, ouvert à toutes les modifications de forme qui pourraient être proposées, serait, dans ses lignes générales, le suivant :

'Au cas où la France et la Grande-Bretagne se trouveraient en état de guerre avec l'Allemagne par suite de l'exécution des engagements qu'elles auraient pris en vue de prévenir toutes modifications apportées par la force au *statu quo* existant en Europe centrale ou orientale, l'U.R.S.S. leur prêterait immédiatement aide et assistance.

'Au cas où par suite du concours prêté par l'U.R.S.S. à la France et à la Grande-Bretagne, dans les conditions prévues au précédent paragraphe, l'U.R.S.S. se trouverait à son tour en état de guerre avec l'Allemagne, la France et la Grande-Bretagne lui prêteraient immédiatement aide et assistance.

'Les trois Gouvernements se concerteront sans délai sur les modalités, dans l'un et l'autre cas envisagés, de cette assistance et prendront toutes dispositions pour lui assurer sa pleine efficacité.'

4. Le Gouvernement français estimant, comme le Gouvernement britannique, hautement désirable de voir un accord d'assistance avec l'U.R.S.S. intervenir dans le plus bref délai, serait heureux de connaître le plus tôt possible l'accueil réservé par le Gouvernement anglais aux observations qu'il croit devoir soumettre à sa plus sérieuse attention.

le 24 avril 1939.

No. 281

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)¹ to Viscount Halifax (Received April 26, 9.30 a.m.)
No. 324 Telegraphic [C 5989/54/18]*

BERLIN, April 25, 1939, 9.19 p.m.

Following is appreciation of the situation by the best informed of my colleagues.²

1. The immediate and very serious danger is Poland and in this connexion it is essential not to recreate fatal impression of last May that Germany has been compelled to draw in her horns as a result of menace from abroad.

2. According to my informant Herr Hitler will not repeat his offer of guarantee for twenty-five years of present Corridor and *status quo* in return for recognition of Danzig as German (while retaining all existing freedom of port facilities etc.) and for extra-territorial corridor across the Corridor (see Berlin telegram No. 317³). He is bitterly incensed at what he regards not only as ingratitude of Poles who profited from Austrian and Sudeten *coups* last year to feather their own nests at the expense of Lithuania and Teschen but also at their refusal of a . . .⁴ which in his opinion he alone is capable of imposing on German people which would deplore recognition of a Corridor which from the first moment after Versailles was always regarded as possibly the most objectionable feature of the Peace Treaty.

3. According to my informant it was probably true that Colonel Beck had some alternative offer up his sleeve but it was not one which would go far enough to satisfy Herr Hitler; in that event it were, he said, better for Polish Government not to make a new inadequate offer at this moment since it would merely be refused and might provoke a critical incident. I asked him when would be an appropriate occasion for Poles to resume negotiations but he could not suggest one. He did not however believe that the German Ambassador would return from Berlin to Warsaw with any new offer.

4. According to my informant it had been a mistake on the part of His Majesty's Government to seek reciprocity guarantee from Poland. In his opinion reciprocity as distinct from unilateral guarantee confirmed in German eyes the threat of encirclement. I replied that encirclement theory was

¹ Sir N. Henderson returned to Berlin on April 25.

² In a letter of April 26 to Lord Halifax, Sir N. Henderson stated that his informant was Signor Attolico. See Appendix I, document (ii).

³ No. 254.

⁴ The text is here uncertain.

figment of German imagination and merely used for propaganda purposes. He admitted that it was used for propaganda purposes in the second place but in first place it was, he said, the definite conviction not only of Nazis but of all Germans who had suffered from blockade in the last war—he went so far as to say that Italian occupation of Albania (though long contemplated) was actually effected 50 per cent. as a result of Daladier's speech (no inch of territory and no new rights for new situations etc.) and 50 per cent. out of fear of Italian encirclement as a result of new British policy.

5. In my informant's opinion Roumania had been wiser than Poland in as much as while grateful for offers of help if required she had not bound herself to a reciprocity which might place her definitely in a hostile camp but had preserved her complete independence of policy. For this reason he did not believe Germany would at present encourage Hungarian action against her. He himself was of the opinion that Herr Hitler's announcement of peace rally at Nuremberg this year⁵ was sincere—provided beforehand he could settle Danzig and the Corridor question and thus be able to say that all Germany's immediate and legitimate aims had been attained. On the other hand he would not be prepared to discuss peace or disarmament until solution of Danzig question (including Corridor) had been reached.

Repeated to Warsaw.

⁵ Herr Hitler had announced in a speech at Wilhelmshaven on April 1 that the 1939 Party rally at Nuremberg would be known as the 'Party Rally of Peace'.

No. 282

*Sir W. Seeds (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 26, 9.0 a.m.)
No. 76 Telegraphic [R 3287/661/67]*

MOSCOW, April 25, 1939, 10.40 p.m.

Your telegram No. 135 to Angora.¹

I venture to point out that:

(a) M. Litvinov's proposals are not of a hard and fast nature but are meant as a basis for discussion.

(b) Addition of words 'if desired' to his clause No. 2 would no more publicly associate the Polish Government with Soviet Union under M. Litvinov's proposal than under the terms of unilateral declaration suggested by His Majesty's Government.

(c) Consequently (except for quite valid argument as to time which would be required to negotiate on lines of Soviet proposal) an answer to Soviet Government in the sense of your present telegram would merely confirm them in the belief that we are trying to evade association with this country's efforts.

Repeated to Angora and Paris.

¹ No. 276.

No. 283

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora)
No. 140 Telegraphic [R 3177/661/67]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 25, 1939, 11.0 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 159.¹

It is difficult for me to offer any observations until I receive text of Turkish reply. Particularly is this the case where eventual treaty is concerned which raises many complicated questions. You will probably, however, feel that to say as much at this stage to Minister for Foreign Affairs might have discouraging effect on him. I leave this point to your discretion.

Repeated to Paris, Rome, Bucharest, Warsaw, Athens, Sofia, Belgrade and Moscow.

¹ No. 271.

No. 284

Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) and
Sir N. Charles (Rome)
No. 133¹ Telegraphic: by telephone [C 6038/15/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 25, 1939, 11.55 p.m.*

1. You should make a statement on the following lines tomorrow when you see Minister for Foreign Affairs.

2. The Prime Minister will be asked in the House of Commons tomorrow April 26 whether he has any further statement to make as to the intentions of the Government to ensure that this country is maintained in a state of preparedness and in a condition to give effect to the new undertakings recently announced.

3. In reply, the Prime Minister will say that His Majesty's Government have recently had under review the arrangements for the calling up for service of members of the Navy, Army and Air Force Reserves and for calling up the Territorial Army. This is a matter which has been under consideration for some time. The present arrangements are based upon statutes in force for many years and they are unsuited to modern conditions. Accordingly it has been decided to introduce a Bill to simplify the procedure for calling up these Reserves and Auxiliary Forces with a view to avoiding the present cumbrous procedure. It is part of that procedure that proclamations have to be issued declaring that a state of emergency exists. It is obviously desirable, if possible, to avoid the disturbance to public confidence here and elsewhere which necessarily results from such a declaration. The procedure now proposed will bring our arrangements into line with those in force in European countries generally.

4. The Prime Minister will go on to announce the intention to introduce a second Bill, providing for a measure of compulsory military training.

¹ No. 133 to Berlin: No. 223 to Rome.

Decision to introduce this Bill is due very largely to a change in public opinion which has been developing steadily for some considerable time. There has been a widespread expression of feeling that a more general system of training than is afforded by the Territorial Army is, in itself, desirable. The Bill will provide for the calling up of men between the ages of 20 and 21 for a period of training, followed by a period of service in the Territorial Forces or in the Supplementary Reserve. The intention is that the power to call up these men will not extend beyond the next three years unless at the end of that time (when experience will, of course, have been gained of the working of the scheme) Parliament should so decide.

5. In explaining the reasons for the introduction of this Bill, the statement on behalf of the Government will naturally refer to the new liabilities which this country has incurred recently in Europe. It will be pointed out that the object of the assurances we have given to certain countries, as well as of the conversations now proceeding with other Governments, is not to wage war but to prevent it. It is felt that our ability to play our part in the world is weakened so long as we leave defence entirely to a voluntary system, more especially as compulsory military service is the universal rule on the Continent.

6. On the other hand, the introduction of this measure is not intended to represent any general departure from the voluntary system which has served so well. The voluntary principle will continue for recruitment for the Navy, the Regular Army, the Air Force and the Territorials as well as for National Service.

7. For your own information, the Prime Minister's statement will also intimate a decision to take steps to limit the profits of firms mainly engaged on the Rearmament Programme.²

² See Parl. Deb., 5th ser., H. of C., vol. 346, cols. 1150-4.

No. 285

Visit of the Roumanian Foreign Minister, April 23-26, 1939

RECORD OF CONVERSATIONS

[C 6138/3356/18]

Third Meeting (in the Secretary of State's Room at the Foreign Office, on April 25, at 3.45 p.m.)

Present: as in No. 278

Yugoslavia.

M. Gafencu repeated that he thought it would be a good thing if the Prince Regent could come to London.

Lord Halifax said that perhaps M. Gafencu would sound him and see what he thought. He might tell Prince Paul that, if he liked to come here, there would be no difficulty from our side. If the suggestion came direct from London, Prince Paul might perhaps feel some embarrassment.

M. Gafencu agreed that it was better that there should be no direct invitation from London. He would put the matter to the Prince Regent, speaking as a Balkan friend and ally. It was better for the Balkans that there should be equilibrium amongst the Great Powers. The Balkan Entente must have an independent policy, but above all it must not move with the Axis Powers. Independence meant, in fact, an understanding with Paris and London, since Paris and London had no demands to make on the Balkan Entente. The British and French guarantee was important from this point of view, in time of peace as well as in time of war. It had put an end to the idea which had become prevalent after Munich that Great Britain and France had abandoned Eastern and South-Eastern Europe to Germany. This was the line which M. Gafencu proposed to develop at Belgrade. He would urge that it was the duty of the Yugoslav Government to make it clear that they had not been completely captured by the Axis Powers. He was certain that neither Prince Paul nor Yugoslav opinion would be in favour of doing anything against Great Britain. M. Gafencu knew that, after the British guarantee had been given to Roumania, there was a good deal of heart-searching in Yugoslavia on the question whether Yugoslavia had herself followed the right policy.

Sir A. Cadogan suggested that M. Gafencu might find out from Prince Paul whether he would like an invitation from us, or whether he would like to come on his own.

M. Gafencu said he would advise him to come without an invitation. If we were to invite him, it would be said that he had no alternative but to accept. It would be better that he should come on his own initiative, as M. Gafencu himself had done.

It was better, in any event, that Prince Paul should come than the Yugoslav Foreign Minister, since the Regent was at the present moment his own Foreign Minister.

Turkey.

M. Gafencu said that Turkey was most important from the point of view of Great Britain as well as from the point of view of Roumania. He felt certain that the German Government were going to use great efforts to establish their influence in Angora. Herr von Papen¹ still had considerable prestige as a diplomat. It was important for the other Powers to concentrate their diplomatic activities in Angora. The Turks, it was true, were not a volatile people and did not easily change their minds, but it was desirable for the other Powers to continue to manifest their interests in Turkey by visits, &c.

Lord Halifax said he was quite alive to this consideration. The more that His Majesty's Government and the Roumanian Government could do to show their interest in the political and economic sphere, the better.

M. Gafencu said that he had visited Istanbul at Easter and was going on an official visit in May.

¹ Herr von Papen had recently been appointed German Ambassador in Turkey.

Lord Halifax raised a point in connexion with the notes² which had been drawn up as a result of M. Gafencu's recent conversation with the Turkish Foreign Minister.

In Point (3) of these notes, it was said that if events should impose on Roumania or Turkey the necessity of making a choice or of taking up a definite position as between the two groups of Powers, it was understood that Roumania and Turkey would *act in common* and would insist that their allies of the Balkan Entente should join the group which was organising itself against domination.

On the other hand, in Point (5) it was said that in a case where, in accordance with Point (3), Roumania was forced to undertake military action, and if Turkey were to remain *either temporarily or permanently outside the conflict*, it was understood that Turkey would maintain a benevolent neutrality.

There appeared to be some conflict between these two statements.

M. Gafencu explained that, of course, these notes did not constitute an agreement, but were merely an unofficial record of what had occurred. The meaning was that the two Powers would do their best to be on the same side, but it might well be that Roumania would enter the conflict before Turkey, and, if so, Turkey would be a benevolent neutral. The important thing to note was that in no event would the two Powers find themselves in opposite camps. But they could not be sure that in all circumstances they would participate actively in the same camp. Roumania might be involved in a war which Turkey did not enter, but in that event Turkey would be in sympathy with Roumania. The notes in question did not constitute an agreement or an alliance; they merely recorded a conversation between the two Ministers of friendly countries, and did nothing more than state the principles which would govern the foreign policy of those two countries.

Lord Halifax thought they might be defined as an approach of sympathetic minds.

M. Gafencu agreed they were an attempt to base the policy of the two countries on the same principles.

Anglo-Turkish Conversations.

Lord Halifax alluded to the discussion on the previous day on a matter connected with our conversations with the Turkish Government. He had spoken of a formula which was under negotiation with the Turkish Government, the object of which was to define the attitude of the two countries in the event of an act of aggression leading to war in the Balkans or the Mediterranean. He was not sure whether he had made it clear to M. Gafencu that he had informed the Turkish Government that if such a formula could be found (and he did not think this would be very difficult) His Majesty's Government were prepared to enter into reciprocal engagements with

² See above, pp. 296-8.

Turkey. He wished to add, also, that His Majesty's Ambassador had suggested that if the formula could be agreed upon with the Turkish Government it might be agreeable to the latter to give the arrangement some more permanent form. If that were the Turkish view, His Majesty's Government would be quite agreeable. He hoped that what His Majesty's Government were doing with the Turkish Government would contribute to the solidarity of the Balkan Powers.

M. Gafencu was glad to hear what Lord Halifax had just said. So far as Turkey was concerned, Roumania had no reserves to make. He hoped that His Majesty's Government would succeed in their efforts, and if, when he went to Turkey in May, he could help, he would do so.

Poland.

M. Gafencu said he had seen the Polish Ambassador in London and had repeated to him what he had told Lord Halifax about his conversations with M. Beck. Count Raczyński had been in complete agreement with that statement, namely, that he and M. Beck had reached an agreement as to the interpretation of the Polish-Roumanian Treaty, and that further technical arrangements would be negotiated at some appropriate moment. Count Raczyński would make a statement to this effect on behalf of the Polish Government to Lord Halifax.

Lord Halifax enquired whether Count Raczyński had any more to say about Polish-German relations, with particular reference to Danzig.

M. Gafencu said that he had not.

Lord Halifax asked whether M. Gafencu himself thought there was any solution to be found for the Danzig problem. To put the point bluntly, did he think M. Beck was being unreasonable or not?

M. Gafencu replied that it was difficult to say.

Lord Halifax said that M. Gafencu had well described on the previous day the respective positions occupied by the Polish and German Governments. The Poles wished to preserve the international status of the Free City, but at the same time they were prepared to give the Germans in Danzig every right and even, perhaps, to surrender their responsibility for Danzig's foreign relations. The Germans, for their part, were prepared to give Poland extensive rights within a German city.

M. Gafencu said that in the Danzig question two German principles were in conflict with each other, namely, the national and ethnic principle on the one hand and the principle of 'Lebensraum' on the other. There was no doubt that Danzig fell within Poland's 'Lebensraum', though at the same time there was no doubt that it was ethnically a German city.

He had spoken to M. Beck in Warsaw about Danzig and had suggested that, as Danzig was undoubtedly a German city, Poland might perhaps be satisfied if Germany left her the Corridor and Gdynia. M. Beck's reply was

that Danzig was a capital question for Poland. It was, first of all, a great port, and for every 10 tons of Polish commerce that passed through Gdynia 7 tons passed through Danzig. It was also a nodal point of communications. Other Poles to whom M. Gafencu had spoken had taken the same view and it was likely that the Polish Government would be very stiff on this question.

M. Tilea recalled that Herr Hitler had said that he would not repeat the proposal he had made to M. Beck. If so, there was likely to be a deadlock.

M. Gafencu said that this was so and he had reported in this sense to King Carol.

Lord Halifax thought that, if German assurances were to be believed (but this was a large hypothesis), it ought not to be impossible to reconcile Polish claims with German sovereignty, if Germany guaranteed Poland all the rights to which she was entitled.

M. Gafencu thought that Herr Hitler's proposal was not altogether unreasonable in itself. But it would only be a first step, and once Germany was master of Danzig further steps would follow.

Lord Halifax said it was clear that M. Beck did not believe the German assurances.

M. Gafencu said that that was why he had suggested that the Germans should be told they must quit Prague before any concessions could be made. It was dangerous to make further concessions to Germany, even though those concessions might be based on justice, if Germany paid no price or gave no compensation. Every crisis produced by Germany ought to cost Germany something. To make this demand of Germany would merely be following the German technique; it was the German way to make violent threats and yet at the same time to leave the door ajar. There was a good deal to be learnt from Herr Hitler in the matter of diplomatic technique. After all, Napoleon himself had been defeated when his own ideas on strategy and tactics had been used against him. Herr Hitler had said again and again that his achievements had been secured without shedding a drop of blood, and this was the key to his methods.

Lord Halifax agreed generally with M. Gafencu's analysis, but he found it difficult to believe that, however loudly the Germans might be asked to quit Prague, Hitler could possibly be brought to comply.

M. Gafencu said that, if Hitler was placed in that position, he could not legitimately ask for Danzig or the colonies.

Lord Halifax asked whether his answer would not be that he had never, for example, coerced President Hacha.

M. Gafencu said that, if that was so, President Hacha had behaved like a criminal.

Bulgaria.

Lord Halifax said that he had been reflecting about the question of Balkan unity, with special reference to Bulgaria, and had a point to put to M. Gafencu.

His Majesty's Government had undertaken commitments towards Roumania and Greece, and they were therefore concerned to see that, if any war should break out, the chances of success should be as great as possible. That was the fundamental justification for the importance which was attached to Balkan unity. Here Bulgaria was, of course, the key point. The Turkish Government were in a better position than any other member of the Balkan Entente to exercise pressure and persuasion upon Bulgaria, if only because Bulgaria had no claims against Turkey. The Turkish Government, Lord Halifax understood, were of the same mind, and were, he thought, disposed to approach the Bulgarian Government and the Governments of the other members of the Balkan Entente with the object of trying to secure the entry of Bulgaria into the Entente. He was not aware whether the Turkish Government had in fact made any firm proposals at Bucharest, and, if so, in what terms.

The question then arose that if the main object were at least the neutralisation of Bulgaria in the event of war, what were the lines on which this could be achieved?

There seemed to be three alternatives:—

- (1) To leave Bulgaria to her own devices, and trust that she would not make the same mistake as she made in the last war.
- (2) (This was the plan developed by M. Gafencu on the previous day.) To start with Bulgaria in the sphere of economics and communications, without raising awkward questions, like the question of frontiers.
- (3) To try to attract Bulgaria to the side of the Western Powers and the Balkan Entente, even at the price of some concession or sacrifice.

Having given their recent guarantees, His Majesty's Government had undertaken risks which might involve heavy sacrifices, and they felt therefore that they had some right to discuss this question.

He wanted to ask how the Roumanian Government assessed the relative dangers to their security from Hungary and from Bulgaria. If Roumania were to grant some conditional concession to Bulgaria, would that be the immediate occasion for a corresponding claim by Hungary? If it was thought possible to avoid any such reaction from Hungary, it might perhaps be argued that such a conditional concession to Bulgaria might be in the best interests of Roumania and of Balkan unity.

On the other hand, again, if such a concession to Bulgaria were likely to precipitate action by Hungary, would it be a feasible policy to do nothing as regards Bulgaria until the immediate Hungarian threat was to emerge, and then to buy off Bulgaria and take a firm stand against Hungary? If this course was adopted, it might bring it home to Hungary that if threats were offered

there would be no concessions, but if there were no threats, concessions might follow.

Lord Halifax asked whether he was correct in defining M. Gafencu's final thought as being that M. Gafencu was not at present in any circumstances disposed to consider the wisdom of making additional concessions to Bulgaria. Lord Halifax fully appreciated the dangers of making concessions, but he was also sensible of the dangers on the other side. This was, of course, not primarily the business of His Majesty's Government, but the business of the Roumanian Government and of the Balkan Powers. He wished to ask whether, if M. Gafencu proceeded with Bulgaria on the lines he had suggested on the previous day (i.e., in the sphere of economics and communications), and if he found that this approach was not likely to succeed, there was any possibility of going any further along the path of concession.

M. Gafencu said that before he left Bucharest there had been a meeting of Ministers and Royal Counsellors, presided over by the King, to examine current problems. The Bulgarian question had been most carefully examined. It was of great importance to reinforce the Balkan Entente and to transform it into a single *bloc*. If it were possible to bring Bulgaria into the *bloc*, there was a possibility that the *bloc* might gain in consistency. It was not, however, a purely arithmetical problem. It was not necessarily true to say that five countries were stronger than four. It was a political problem also. The question was, was the fifth country determined in all circumstances to march in step with the rest? If they brought in a fifth country which had connexions outside the Entente and pursued a policy out of harmony with the rest, the Entente would not gain in strength. The Greek Government thought there was hardly anything to be done about Bulgaria; the more the Bulgarian Government received, the more they wanted. It suffered from a kind of megalomania. General Metaxas said that if he thought any Roumanian Minister was considering concessions to Bulgaria, he would go straight to Bucharest and advise them against it. The general did not think that the Bulgarian Government was sincere.

M. Gafencu said that he himself always tended to admit the good faith of others. He had done so in the case of Hungary over the Ruthenian question, and the only result was that Hungary had kept an army mobilised on the Roumanian frontier.

He felt that both Bulgaria and Hungary were strongly subject to German and Italian propaganda.

In view of all this, the Roumanian Government had come to a clear decision not to make, or speak of, territorial concessions. To do so would be dangerous to their policy of resistance. They could not be confident that Bulgaria would become a friend and ally all at once. To admit her in these circumstances would weaken the Balkan Entente. At present, the members of the Balkan Entente were unanimous in their determination to defend the Entente against Bulgaria. If Roumania were attacked by Hungary or Germany, the Turkish Government had told the Bulgarian Government that

they would mobilise and would see to it that Bulgarian troops did not enter into Roumania. He believed that the Greek Government had said the same thing. The situation was not the same as it was in 1914, because this time Roumania would have Turkey on her side instead of against her.

If he had explained the situation in this way, he did not want to say that it was his final word. He wished to examine the situation in agreement with the Turkish Foreign Minister. The Turkish Government had not made any embarrassing proposals to the Roumanian Government. They had merely proposed that the two Governments should together study the Bulgarian problem and see what it might be possible to do with the Bulgarian Government. The latest idea of the Turkish Foreign Minister had been to try to create an external frontier of the Balkan Entente, leaving open the possibility of political arrangements on internal matters between the partners and friends who were members of the Entente, and who had proved their good faith and their spirit of unity. The Roumanian Government were perfectly ready to study this question, but they thought it wise to take one step at a time, and they thought it best to start with economic matters.

M. Gafencu said that he would report to his Government what Lord Halifax had said and what he himself had replied. He would study the Bulgarian question further in Rome, and listen to what the Italian Government had to say. Of course they were working against the Balkan Entente. He would make it clear that Roumania firmly adhered to the Entente and that if any Power worked against the Entente they were working against Roumania. He would see what the Italian Government had to say. Prince Paul thought that Italy and Bulgaria were in close association.

M. Gafencu said he would also see how matters stood in Belgrade. If Yugoslavia were to stand outside the Entente, it was no use making any concessions to Bulgaria. In that event Bulgaria would certainly be an enemy.

Lord Halifax thought there was great force in what M. Gafencu had said, and his arguments were very strong. It was no part of the purpose of His Majesty's Government to try to press the Roumanian Government to adopt methods which they might think dangerous.

M. Gafencu said that he was glad to know that Lord Halifax's sentiments were like his own. It was necessary to try to do something with Bulgaria, but, while a good Bulgaria would be good for the Entente, an uncertain Bulgaria would be dangerous. As things stood at present Bulgaria could not do much harm, since she was contained by Turkey, Greece and Roumania.

Lord Halifax said he thought that M. Gafencu's attitude was a wise one. He was grateful for the frank explanations which M. Gafencu had given.

When he reported to King Carol he would not, Lord Halifax was sure, give him the impression that we were trying to press the Roumanian Government against their better knowledge and judgment. But His Majesty's Government and the Roumanian Government had a common purpose in view, namely, the creation of a single Balkan *bloc*.

M. Gafencu said that what he had heard from Lord Halifax was of great importance.

Lord Halifax said that there was one point which should always be remembered. It was part of German technique to keep everyone else in a state of great uncertainty. A few months ago the danger point seemed to be Roumania; at another time it seemed to be Holland and the Western Powers. Now it seemed to be Danzig. It might well be that in another month the danger point would be somewhere else. The only conclusion to be drawn from German assurances, therefore, was that it was necessary to be vigilant everywhere.

M. Tilea suggested that the joint danger points in the near future might well be Danzig and Yugoslavia.

M. Gafencu did not think that Yugoslavia would be a danger point just yet. So long as the Axis Powers thought that Yugoslavia could be used as an instrument they would not try to weaken her. When the time came they would probably try to weaken her from within. In the same way so long as Roumania could be considered as a bulwark against Russia, Germany would probably not try to weaken her. Roumanian friendship with France and Great Britain did not worry Germany, since it enabled Roumania to be in a strong position against Russia. If, however, Roumania entered into close relations with Russia, Germany would have a great interest in trying to weaken her.

Roumania must, therefore, maintain her friendship with France and Great Britain and must say quite firmly that she wished European equilibrium to be preserved. It was for that reason that when invited to Berlin he had said that he would come, but that he proposed also to visit London and Paris. Roumania would not make a policy with Germany against Russia, nor a policy with Russia against Germany. This was the main principle of M. Gafencu's foreign policy. If he abandoned this principle, he would lose his country.

Soviet Union.

Lord Halifax thought it would be useful if M. Gafencu, when he was in Paris, developed what he had said here in London about the Soviet Union, because it appeared that the French Government were anxious to secure some closer connexion with the Soviet Union than Roumania or Poland wanted.

M. Gafencu said that he was afraid that this was so, and it was for this reason that he had asked the Roumanian Ambassador in Paris to meet him at Le Touquet on his way to London. On the other hand, the Polish Ambassador in London, who had just come back from Paris, said that the Polish Ambassador in Paris reported that M. Bonnet had given him satisfactory assurances on this point, to the effect that France would not accept the mutual assistance pact proposed by the Soviet Government.

Lord Halifax said he would tell M. Gafencu, strictly for his own information, what the view of the French Government was.

The French Government recognised that the Polish and Roumanian Governments would object to an agreement for Soviet assistance to those countries, direct or indirect. They thought that the two countries would also object to a unilateral declaration by the Soviet Government of direct or indirect assistance.

M. Gafencu here interjected that the Polish Government had informed him that they would not accept unilateral declarations from anyone. The Polish Government would only accept bilateral arrangements, and with Russia no bilateral arrangement was possible.

Lord Halifax asked whether M. Gafencu thought that the Polish Government would violently object if the Soviet Government said their assistance would be available in the most convenient form if wanted.

M. Gafencu said that M. Beck had told him that the German Government felt that if they attacked Poland they would have Russia against them as well as Great Britain and France. The conclusion he drew from this was that even in Poland there was some feeling of the importance of Russian assistance.

Lord Halifax said that his own view would be that any statement made by the Soviet Government should be general in form, and should be designed to offer assistance to any victim of aggression that defended itself.

M. Gafencu thought that this could do no harm to anyone.

Lord Halifax said that the French Government also thought that the Soviet Government would insist on receiving an assurance that if the assistance which was asked of them exposed the Soviet Union to an attack by Germany, Great Britain and France would come to their help. Their conclusion was that there must therefore be an agreement of mutual assistance between Great Britain, France and Russia.

Lord Halifax's reaction to this was that it did not fit in well with the objections raised by the French Government to any arrangement directly or indirectly affecting Poland or Roumania, since it was obvious in the circumstances contemplated that Russia could hardly afford effective help to Great Britain or France without indirectly forcing her assistance upon Poland or Roumania.

M. Gafencu thought that too close an association with the Soviet Government would be embarrassing to everyone except the Germans.

Lord Halifax then read passages from a telegram from His Majesty's Ambassador at Paris reporting on the French attitude.³ In the view of the French Government, agreement would only be possible on two conditions. In the first place, the agreement must only mention mutual and reciprocal engagements of assistance between the three Governments (Great Britain,

³ See No. 277.

France and Russia) without naming any other State. The formula proposed to the Soviet Government must therefore be in terms wide enough not to indicate specifically this country or that, and precise enough to apply, nevertheless, to the most pressing and probable emergencies. In the second place, the French Government were also assured that the adherence of the Soviet Government to the immediate agreement proposed could only be secured in so far as the Soviet Government received an assurance that if the assistance which was asked of the Soviet Union exposed the Soviet Union to an attack by Germany, then France and Great Britain would come to their help.

The French Government therefore proposed a Tripartite Agreement on the following lines: (1) If France and Great Britain found themselves at war with Germany as a result of executing engagements taken by them in respect of Central or Eastern Europe, Russia would immediately assist them. (2) If, as a result of the help given by Russia to France and Great Britain in the above conditions, Russia found herself at war with Germany, Great Britain and France would immediately assist her.

Lord Halifax's comment on the second of these points was that it seemed rather pointless, since if Great Britain and France were already at war with Germany, they could not be more at war with her, even in order to assist the Soviet Government.

M. Gafencu said that the French proposal seemed to him to be for a large new general Pact of mutual assistance. Such a Pact would not be very good for the cause of peace. If war broke out, everybody would be in, and no doubt if the Russians wanted to help, everybody would be glad to receive that help. But if there was a 20 per cent. chance or a 10 per cent. chance of saving peace, nothing should be done to jeopardise it.

Lord Halifax repeated that he thought it would be helpful if M. Gafencu could speak in this sense in Paris.

M. Gafencu promised to speak frankly. He felt it to be his first duty to his country to make every effort to save peace, because if war broke out Russia and Germany might fight on Roumanian territory. If Germany won, Roumania would be a vassal. If Russia won, Roumania would be bolshevik.

In his view every friendly gesture made by Great Britain and France helped the cause of peace and established the equilibrium of the Powers.

Lord Halifax said that at the same time it was desirable not to estrange Russia, but always to keep her in play.

M. Gafencu begged that nothing he had said about Russia should be disclosed.

He said that the German and Italian Governments had asked the Roumanian Government to join the Anti-Comintern Pact. Roumania, Turkey and Greece had all refused; he had urged the Yugoslav Government also to refuse.

It was impossible for Roumania to follow a policy with Russia against Germany. If, on the other hand, His Majesty's Government asked the Soviet

Government to make a unilateral declaration, without mentioning either Roumania or Poland, and using general phrases, he would see no objection.

Lord Halifax thought it would be quite enough if the Soviet Government repeated Stalin's statement, with special reference to the commitments His Majesty's Government and France had entered into in Eastern Europe. The Soviet Government would not be called upon to give help to Roumania or Poland (if those countries wanted it) unless Great Britain and France were already involved. It would be quite easy for the Soviet Government to play on these terms if they wanted to.

M. Tilea thought the Soviet Government were again anxious to play a role in European politics.

M. Gafencu said he had to admit that the Soviet Government had been good neighbours, and had not caused trouble.

He was most grateful for the information which Lord Halifax had given to him.

Hungary.

Lord Halifax asked what M. Gafencu thought about Roumania's relations with Hungary.

M. Gafencu replied that this depended on Germany. He was afraid that Germany held Hungary ready as a means of pressure against Roumania. He did not think, however, that Germany would exercise such pressure so long as Roumania did not enter into close relations with Soviet Russia and so long as she could continue to be considered as a bastion against Bolshevism. If Roumania's policy changed in this respect, Germany would incite Hungary against Roumania.

He had tried to achieve a *détente* with Hungary. He had maintained good relations with the Hungarian minority in Roumania and had tried to bring their leaders into the National Front. When the Hungarian Foreign Minister had recently made disobliging remarks about Roumania, the Hungarian minority leaders in Parliament had come to him to protest against Count Csaky's words. M. Gafencu had hoped to achieve the *détente* through the application of the Bled Agreement of August 1938. This was an agreement between the three Little Entente Powers and Hungary, by which (1) the Little Entente recognised Hungary's right to rearm; (2) Hungary agreed to make non-aggression agreements; (3) the Little Entente made a declaration favourable to their Hungarian minorities. This agreement was initialled, but never signed or published. It had been drawn up during the Czech crisis, and the Hungarians saw very well that it could not be applied to Czecho-Slovakia, but they did make a gentleman's agreement to apply it to Roumania and Yugoslavia, and, in fact, informed the Roumanian Government orally that they regarded this gentleman's agreement as being in force. Unfortunately, after the Czech crisis they had tried to draw a distinction between Yugoslavia and Roumania—no doubt at Italy's instigation—and showed signs of wishing for friendly relations with Yugoslavia alone.

In the same way he had tried in the Ruthenian question to prove Roumania's friendship for Hungary. They did not oppose the Hungarian occupation of Ruthenia (though they had taken up a hostile attitude to this in September last). Unfortunately, the Hungarian Government did not reciprocate, and had begun once again to cherish expansionist aspirations. Mobilisation on one side had been followed by mobilisation on the other, and in place of assurances the Hungarian Government had merely given evasive formulæ. It was only after Great Britain and France had given their guarantees, and possibly under pressure from Germany (it was at the time of his visit to Berlin) that the Hungarian Foreign Minister made a declaration in Parliament, which, though only indirectly, expressed the intention to respect Roumania's frontiers.

When he went to Rome and Belgrade he would see how things stood. Italy was trying to improve relations between Hungary and Yugoslavia, and it might well be that she would try to improve relations between Hungary and Roumania. He was not quite sure whether, in their Hungarian policy, Italy and Germany were following quite the same line. In any event, Roumania was willing to show her goodwill both in the treatment of minorities, and on the question of non-aggression. The Hungarian Government had indeed recalled that the gentleman's agreement at Bled still existed. When M. Gafencu asked why in that case it could not be signed and published, the Hungarian Government had replied that although it existed, they did not now agree with everything that was in it.

Lord Halifax enquired whether M. Gafencu had any new proposals for dealing with the Hungarian minority. He recalled that M. Comnène had mentioned certain schemes when he had come to this country with King Carol.⁴

M. Tilea replied that the arrangements reached at Bled were still in force.

M. Gafencu admitted that there were still difficulties, particularly on the question of nationality. If the minorities were not incited from outside, they would probably be content. They were aware that the Roumanian Government were willing to do what they could. In the relations between Roumania and Hungary the influence of outside Powers was apt to intervene. He would therefore be interested to see what the Italian Government had to say when he went to Rome. He thought the Italian Government sincerely desired a *détente* between Roumania and Hungary.

Lord Halifax thought this likely, since if there were trouble Germany would benefit more than Italy.

Yugoslavia.

M. Tilea read a telegram from the Roumanian Minister at Belgrade reporting on an interview which he had had, under instructions, with the Prince Regent.

⁴ In November, 1938.

Prince Paul had categorically denied that there had been any discussion of a Yugoslav-Bulgarian-Hungarian understanding. He had declared that Yugoslavia based her policy in the first place upon Yugoslavia's relations with Roumania and the other members of the Balkan Entente. This was a primary interest of Yugoslavia, and it would be madness to abandon it. He asked the Roumanian Government to rely upon his loyalty, but he begged them to take account of Yugoslavia's difficulties. There were Italian troops in Albania; Germany was a neighbour; and Bulgaria was unsafe. There was also the difficulty of the internal question. This was going quite well, but there were still difficulties, although concessions had been made to the Croats.

The Prince Regent said that the proceedings at Venice had been satisfactory. Italy had made no new proposals, but had insisted on an improvement in the relations between Yugoslavia and Hungary within the framework of Yugoslavia's alliance with Roumania. It was difficult to see how such an amelioration could be achieved, and the Yugoslav Government had no plan, but it was clear they could only act in close accord with the Roumanian Government.

As regards Bulgaria, Prince Paul said he had no reason to change his opinion of King Boris's lack of sincerity. He was astonished that His Majesty's Government should pin their faith on King Boris after the experience of 1914.

As regards the general situation, Prince Paul was very disturbed, but he thought that the situation would be improved by the growing strength of the Western Powers, by the attitude of America and by the new arrangement with Poland.

Prince Paul was indignant at the news published in the French press about Yugoslavia, which he said was quite inaccurate.

The Roumanian Minister in Belgrade also reported that public opinion in Yugoslavia was moving towards the Western Powers. The situation was disturbed and 120,000 more men had been called up. There had been a manifestation among the patriotic youth of the university, inspired by the General Staff.

(The meeting adjourned at 5.35 p.m.)

No. 286

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 26, 6.15 p.m.)

No. 163 Telegraphic [R 3301/661/67]

ANGORA, April 26, 1939, 2.0 p.m.

Your telegram No. 126.¹

Turkish reply was handed to me by Minister for Foreign Affairs last night. After acknowledging receipt of letter by which contents of your telegram under reference were communicated to him, Minister for Foreign Affairs re-

¹ No. 219.

defines standpoint of His Majesty's Government as understood by him and explained by him to Cabinet, viz.,

His Majesty's Government would contemplate Anglo-Turkish mutual assistance in following manner.

(1) Any war which broke out as a result of an aggression by Axis Powers and involved Italian participation in such a way as to bring England or Turkey into the war against last named Power, would necessarily be regarded as a Mediterranean war and would *ipso facto* bring Anglo-Turkish assistance into play. More precisely, any Turco-Italian or Anglo-Italian war would involve Anglo-Turkish collaboration.

(2) Any war resulting from an aggression by Axis Powers and spreading to the Balkans would bring mutual assistance between Turkey and Great Britain into operation.

(3) Parallel with Anglo-Turkish agreement an agreement for Anglo-Soviet assistance would be concluded together with a Turco-Soviet agreement conceived in same spirit as that proposed between Turkey and Great Britain.

(4) Turkey and England would continue their parallel attempts to settle Bulgaro-Roumanian dispute and to ensure if possible the participation or at least the neutrality of Bulgaria.

(5) Turkey having on the one hand vital interests from point of view of her economy and of her armaments to safeguard in Germany, and on the other hand the defence of the Straits being of the greatest importance from point of view of efficacy of Anglo-Turkish mutual assistance, conversations would immediately be opened in London to determine British assistance to Turkey in economic and financial spheres and as regards provision of various kinds of military supplies, and to lay down methods of effective assistance in light of various probabilities.

(6) Above conditions having been fulfilled, a treaty of mutual assistance of a lasting character would be concluded between Turkey and England, ratified by the two Parliaments, and thus made public with no secret clause except Staff agreements.

2. Letter then continues as follows:

'Such are conclusions which I have drawn both from our various conversations and from the written papers which we have exchanged on the subject. However, as regards paragraph 2 I would like to give greater precision to proposal contained in your letter. I would propose to word paragraph 2 as follows:

'“2. Any war resulting from an aggression by Axis Powers and spreading to the Balkans in such a way as to threaten security of Turkey would bring mutual assistance between Turkey and Great Britain into operation”.

'3. I hope views of our two Governments on our understanding of the question are identical and that His Majesty's Government will agree as to necessity of the greater precision given to paragraph 2. In this event I have

the honour to inform Your Excellency that Government of the Republic expresses its agreement in principle to this effect and that it will delegate experts with power to treat on all questions mentioned in paragraph 5 with British experts.

'4. It will on the other hand await the result of Anglo-Soviet conversations, being itself in touch with Government of U.S.S.R. on this same question in connexion with its Turco-Soviet aspect.

'5. Turkish Government agree to declare at any time if it is felt to be necessary that Turkish and English Governments are in close consultation and that discussions which are taking place between them reveal their customary identity of views.'

Ends.²

See also my immediately following telegram.³

Repeated to Paris, Rome, Bucharest, Warsaw, Athens, Sofia, Belgrade and Moscow.

² For the French text of this communication, see No. 308.

³ No. 287.

No. 287

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 27, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 164 Telegraphic [R 3345/661/67]

ANGORA, April 26, 1939, 6.34 p.m.

My telegram No. 163.¹

Minister for Foreign Affairs amplified the written communication by the following statement of attitude of Turkish Government in negotiations with the Soviet Government.

2. They desire to conclude an agreement with Soviet Government on the same lines, but not a treaty in general terms or covering as much ground as their Agreement with His Majesty's Government. They intend agreement with U.S.S.R. to cover any areas in which Turkey and the Soviets are jointly interested viz. Balkans and Black Sea but not other neighbours of the U.S.S.R. such as Poland and the Baltic States.

3. They . . .² offer no views as to extent or character of any agreement His Majesty's Government propose to make with the Soviets.

4. I read to Minister for Foreign Affairs in French draft of this telegram and he has concurred orally.

5. My telegram No. 167³ reports further conversation with him on April 26.

Repeated to Paris, Rome, Bucharest, Warsaw, Athens, Sofia, Belgrade and Moscow.

¹ No. 286.

² The text is here uncertain.

³ No. 291.

No. 288

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 27, 9.30 a.m.)
No. 328 Telegraphic [C 6046/16/18]

BERLIN, April 26, 1939, 7.35 p.m.

My immediately preceding telegram.¹

In the course of my conversation with State Secretary this morning I impressed upon him change in attitude of public opinion in England which I ascribed as being due to unwarrantable destruction of Czech independence and Herr Hitler's breach of faith towards the Prime Minister. Apart from Munich Agreement I quoted Herr Hitler's letter of September 27² to the Prime Minister.

State Secretary observed that Herr Hitler would doubtless give his answer to the latter reproach in his speech on Friday. It had, he believed, already been written out and translations of it would be made as soon as possible. I said that the whole world was waiting for this particular speech and that I earnestly hoped that it would afford a bridge and not a barrier to better things. State Secretary replied that he was not in a position to give me any indication as to its terms. I did not however derive the impression that it was likely to be conciliatory at any rate in detail. Be that as it may *if* there is any helpful gesture in it I would urge that it may prove wiser for His Majesty's Government and British press to stress the good points in it rather than criticise the bad ones.

¹ No. 289. These telegrams were despatched in reverse order.

² See Volume II of this Series, No. 1144.

No. 289

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 27, 9.30 a.m.)
No. 327 Telegraphic [C 6051/15/18]

BERLIN, April 26, 1939, 7.40 p.m.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs being occupied this morning with meeting between Herr Hitler and Yugoslav Minister for Foreign Affairs I communicated the statement contained in your telegram No. 133¹ regarding the military service in Britain to the State Secretary at midday. As the news of Cabinet decision had already appeared in the German press Baron Weizsäcker made no particular comment and confined himself to observing that I was presumably pleased personally and to asking how many men would be called to the colours.

I told him that he was correct in assuming that I was personally pleased inasmuch as this measure was in accordance with the statement that I had

¹ No. 284.

already made public in Germany to the effect that peace would only be assured once Britain was in a position to defend herself. I said that I could not tell him exactly what number of men would be involved in the calling up of the class between 20 and 21 but I expected that between 150 to 180 thousand would be enrolled.

Speaking as from notes from conversations with you and Prime Minister I stated that His Majesty's Government were as determined as ever to do all in their power to preserve peace and to seek a satisfactory solution of outstanding difficulties without resort to war. His Majesty's Government realised, I said, that there were problems to solve but they were convinced that the solutions could be found without resort to a world war which would be disastrous to mankind. I added that His Majesty's Government had no aggressive designs against any other Power and would not permit themselves to be made parties to any aggression by others. Moreover the public announcement of their intention to resist aggression in certain specified cases implied no desire to encircle or threaten Germany or Italy but had been made solely with the desire to the forestalling of incidents which might lead others to war if Britain's position were not made clear beforehand. Baron Weizsäcker took careful written note of the above statement. It was not, he said, for him to criticise the policy of His Majesty's Government but he did fear lest it might lead to opposite result to that desired. Incidents would not, he said, be of German making. There were however, he said, daily incidents in Poland of ill-treatment of Germans. For the moment the German press were not taking them up but they might easily one day become too outrageous to be ignored. Encouraged by belief in British support attitude of Poles constituted today the great and serious menace to peace. In the eyes of Herr Hitler the British policy would be judged by facts and results and not by mere words (I learn incidentally and indirectly through Nuncio who gets his reports from the Catholic priests in Poland that there are in fact many incidents of ill-treatment of Germans and that there is even agitation there in pamphlet form for incorporation in Poland of the whole of East Prussia).

Referring to introduction of measure of compulsory service in England State Secretary remarked that Germany 'as I probably knew from secret service reports' was the only country which was not taking special mobilisation precautions.²

He mentioned in this connexion in addition to France mobilisations in Holland, Belgium, Roumania and Poland. I confined myself to observing that standing German army was in any case large enough not to be afraid of any aggression from its neighbours and that precautionary measures of the latter were the true answer to Herr Hitler's enquiry as to whether they were afraid of German aggression.

My general impression was that State Secretary was not pessimistic except in so far as Poland was concerned but that in the latter respect he was

² A Foreign Office minute on this passage pointed out that, although the statement might be technically true, Germany had in fact 'some million and a half men under arms,' and that there were reports of warnings to reservists to 'stand by' as from April 28.

seriously perturbed lest the present anti-German and over-confident attitude of the Poles might lead to serious incidents.

I mentioned casually to the State Secretary that the scheme for partial and temporary introduction of military service in England had been contemplated and was in the course of elaboration long before the last Prague *coup* or President Roosevelt's message.

Repeated to Warsaw.

No. 290

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax

(Received April 27, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 129 Telegraphic [C 6062/54/18]

WARSAW, April 26, 1939, 8.13 p.m.

The problem of German-Polish relations as seen from Warsaw differs widely from the description given in Berlin telegram No. 324.¹ I do not understand whether it is Poland's weakness or strength that is supposed to constitute an 'immediate and serious danger'. M. Beck's attitude to negotiations over Danzig is, I think, understood by His Majesty's Government.

2. Poland considers, in my view rightly, that any analogy between Poland and Czecho-Slovakia or between Sudeten and Danzig questions is absurd. There is no question of Danzig being a threat to Germany or of Germans being ill-treated there. On the contrary many Poles consider that they have a grievance owing to German violation of Constitution of Free City. But even if such an analogy were drawn, deduction from 'experience' would be that Poland must fight if faced by an ultimatum. I think that this would always have been true in the case of Poland but in April 1939 after Herr Hitler's repeated breaches of faith, after rape of Czecho-Slovakia, after utilization of each concession as a means of squeezing more, after partial mobilization here and after exchange of guarantees with Great Britain, it is absolutely fundamental that Poland must fight rather than make concessions under menaces. Though reasonable concessions as between equals are by no means excluded, the mere offer by Herr Hitler of one more guarantee would now carry little or no weight. Moreover his terms seem to include extra-territorial corridor across the Corridor which is totally unacceptable to Poland.

3. M. Beck is probably the most pacific of the Polish leaders at the present time and can be relied on to avoid provocation but if he made a false step he would be hounded from office and replaced by someone far more intransigent.

4. The Polish Government are unmoved by whispering campaign mingled with menaces and promises fomented by Nazis amongst foreigners in Berlin and elsewhere. Its object is clear, namely to sow defeatism and distrust of her allies in this country, the only fighting nation left in Eastern Europe.

¹ No. 281.

5. I venture to submit that Poland's calm and unprovocative confidence in herself and her allies is the chief element of stability in this part of Europe.

6. Danger would arise if Nazis under-estimated or misrepresented to Herr Hitler:

(a) the determination of Polish character and

(b) the all-round consequences of his successive *coups*.

Important semi-official statement of Polish attitude is contained in my telegram No. 39 Saving² which follows by air mail.

Repeated to Berlin.

² Not printed. The telegram summarized a leading article in the semi-official 'Gazeta Polska' on Polish-German relations.

No. 291

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax

(Received April 27, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 167 Telegraphic [R 3325/661/67]

ANGORA, April 26, 1939, 8.43 p.m.

My telegrams Nos. 163¹ and 164.²

You will notice that whereas original intention had been to cover Mediterranean and Balkans in one clause (see for instance paragraphs 3 and 4 of your telegram No. 126³) Turkish Government have now placed them in two separate clauses.

2. Explanation is partly provided in my telegram No. 164 but Minister for Foreign Affairs has explained further as follows:

(a) As regards Mediterranean he considers Turkey as absolutely committed to mutual assistance with us. If either were at war with Italy the other would come in at once.

(b) As regards Balkans he does not like to go quite so far owing to considerations regarding Soviets. Inclusion of words 'in such a way as to threaten security of Turkey' in paragraph 2 (2) as shown in my telegram No. 163 is proposed firstly for reasons given in my telegram No. 164, secondly, because Turkish Government do not want to bind themselves to us beyond a certain point before they have come to an understanding with Soviets, and thirdly, because they want to retain some latitude for negotiations with Soviets. Minister for Foreign Affairs considers that in actual fact wording which he proposes would cover a threat by the Axis Powers to Balkans. He feels, however, that he cannot undertake so general an obligation to Soviets as to His Majesty's Government. Among other things such an agreement would cover outside eventualities even as far as a Russo-Japanese war in which Turkey would have no interest. His present idea is to give Soviets the same undertakings as regards Black Sea as he has to us as regards Mediterranean. He is anxious to see how attitude of Soviet Government develops

¹ No. 286.

² No. 287.

³ No. 219.

and I think he does not exclude possibility of enlarging his obligations in the Balkans if committed in return for getting more out of Soviets.

3. I asked him whether in general his reply meant that subject to text of paragraph 2 (2) he was in agreement with our proposals as defined by him in my telegram No. 163. He replied in the affirmative.

4. I pointed out that he had not answered your question as to whether he understood 'Balkan solidarity' to include Bulgaria as well as Balkan Entente Powers (your telegram No. 126 paragraph 2). He said he did.

5. I asked whether by 'parallel with' in clause 3 of paragraph 1 of my telegram No. 163 and by 'above conditions having been fulfilled' in clause 6 he meant he was unwilling to conclude final agreement with us until agreements with Soviet Government had been concluded. While evidently anxious to avoid binding himself finally to us in so far as Balkans (as distinct from Mediterranean) are concerned until more certain of Soviet Government, he did not appear to wish all these negotiations to proceed *pari passu*. He seemed to think Soviet attitude is developing in the right direction.

6. Finally I said I thought we were approaching a point when main lines of our agreement could be drafted. I said that subject to your views as to proposals in my telegram No. 163 and without in the slightest degree committing you it seemed to me personally that agreement would contain three clauses: first would express general identity of interests and policy based generally on paragraphs 1 and 2 of my telegram No. 133⁴ and of first sentence of paragraph 2 of your telegram No. 126, and second and third would deal with Mediterranean and Balkans respectively on lines indicated in my telegram No. 163. I said I could not possibly say whether you would agree to this suggestion which showed purely how the matter presented itself to me. Minister for Foreign Affairs concurred in this and expressed desire that political agreement should be negotiated here and agreement resulting from Staff conversations be concluded in London. I said I had no idea how you would view this and that it was possible that you would prefer to conclude political agreement also in London which was the centre of so many other similar negotiations. His Excellency seemed to prefer his own suggestion. I said I would submit the matter to you.

Repeated to Paris, Rome, Bucharest, Warsaw, Athens, Sofia, Belgrade and Moscow.

⁴ Not printed. See No. 190, note 1.

No. 292

Mr. Rendel (Sofia) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 27, 9.30 a.m.)
No. 62 Telegraphic [R 3346/661/67]

SOFIA, April 26, 1939, 9.0 p.m.

Assistant Soviet Commissar for Foreign Affairs M. Potemkin arrived in Sofia this morning from Bucharest and left again this afternoon for Istanbul.

President of the Council placed his special railway coach at his disposal for the journey on Bulgarian territory.

President of the Council tells me that he had a very satisfactory interview this morning with M. Potemkin who is apparently hopeful of reaching complete agreement with the Turkish Government regarding joint action for resisting aggression. He said that the Bulgarian Government would welcome any such agreement.

Repeated to Angora, Bucharest and Moscow.

No. 293

*Sir N. Charles (Rome) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 27, 9.30 a.m.)
No. 395 Telegraphic [C 6043/15/18]*

ROME, April 26, 1939, 10.30 p.m.

I communicated to the Minister for Foreign Affairs this morning the sense of your telegram No. 223¹ and left note giving details. The Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs expressed no surprise and said he had expected His Majesty's Government would take some step in direction of National Service before long.

¹ No. 284.

No. 294

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 27)
No. 242 Saving: Telegraphic [C 6040/15/18]*

PARIS, April 26, 1939

M. Bonnet begs me to let Your Lordship and the Prime Minister know how deeply grateful he and M. Daladier are to His Majesty's Government for the great step¹ announced today. They are convinced that it will have far-reaching and most healthy results everywhere.

¹ i.e. the announcement of the introduction of conscription. See No. 284.

No. 295

Visit of the Roumanian Foreign Minister, April 23-26, 1939

RECORD OF CONVERSATIONS

[C 6138/3356/18]

*Fourth Meeting (in the Secretary of State's Room at the Foreign Office,
on April 26, at 12.45 p.m.)*

Present: as in No. 278 with the exception of Mr. Strang

The Jewish Problem.

M. Gafencu said that he knew that M. Beck had discussed this question with the Secretary of State. M. Gafencu, too, had discussed the matter with

M. Beck and they were quite at one in their approach to the problem. The Roumanian attitude was to try and solve the difficulties on a basis of justice, but, at the same time, on a basis that would distinguish between Jews who had been settled for a long time in the country and those who had only been recently settled. For Roumania the Jewish problem was of the utmost importance. One of the most useful weapons in Germany's hands was the influence of German policy with regard to the Jews on the large numbers of people in Eastern Europe who held anti-Semitic views. It had been a powerful weapon in the hands of the Iron Guard, and the Germans had not been slow to use it to the great danger of Roumania. Something had to be done to ensure that anti-Semitism should not be pushed to extremes, and it was the conviction of the Roumanian Government that every effort should be made to fit the problem into a wider international frame. M. Gafencu repeated that for Roumania the question was a capital question.

Lord Halifax said that he quite appreciated this view and had not forgotten what M. Beck had said on the subject. The Palestinian question had also brought His Majesty's Government face to face with the problem. They had been led to feel that the whole situation would be considerably eased if we could find some area in the colonies where schemes of agricultural and industrial activity on a large scale could be developed by an imported Jewish population. Recently a commission of Jews had visited British Guiana to investigate the matter. The Governor of British Guiana had just returned home and the commission would soon report. From the preliminary impressions received from the Governor, His Majesty's Government were not without hope that it might be possible to make a rather large contribution to the problem by utilising the resources of British Guiana, and in that event they hoped to be able to give to the questions of Polish and Roumanian Jews the place due to them within the framework of the larger problem.

(At this stage, 1.20 p.m., the Secretary of State bade farewell to M. Gafencu and returned to the meeting with the Trades Union Council at No. 10, Downing Street.)

Communiqué.

The following communiqué was then agreed upon:

'The visit of the Roumanian Foreign Minister to London has afforded a welcome opportunity for an exchange of views between His Excellency M. Gafencu and the Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. The meetings were characterised by the utmost frankness and cordiality on both sides and served to emphasise the general community of outlook existing between the two Governments concerning current problems.'

Armaments for Roumania.

Sir A. Cadogan then reverted to the question of armaments. From the discussion which ensued it appeared that there had been some misunderstanding, as, according to the Roumanian Minister, his Military Attaché, on

visiting the War Office, had gathered that they had received no instructions from the Foreign Office to discuss the question of Roumanian armaments. Sir Alexander understood that these instructions had already been given verbally yesterday morning and in writing yesterday afternoon, but he undertook to see that all three Service Departments should be reminded at once that it was for them now to discuss details with the experts of the Roumanian Legation.

Bulgaria.

In reply to a specific enquiry by Sir A. Cadogan, M. Gafencu said that he would have no objection to our informing the Turkish Government through our Ambassador in Angora of his point of view regarding the Bulgarian problem.

(The proceedings then closed.)

No. 296

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)

No. 1039 [R 3323/7/22]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 26, 1939*

Sir,

The French Ambassador asked to see me today, on instructions from M. Daladier, to report to me on a conversation which the Ambassador had had with him last Monday. M. Daladier had discussed with him the suggestion that Your Excellency had made on my behalf, asking the French Government to consider the possibility of initiating some conversations with the Italian Government on the subject of Italian claims.

2. M. Daladier had been a good deal puzzled by this approach on our part, inasmuch as he felt sure that His Majesty's Government were well aware of the general situation and, he imagined, judged it not very differently from the French Government. In the view of the latter the Italian Government were so closely attached to the Axis that it was idle to expect Italy to leave it, and, from all the information in the possession of the French Government, the Italian Government were not likely to be content with any moderate compromise arrangements, but would only use them for a jumping-off place for further claims. Quite recently there had come into the possession of the French Government evidence of very wide Italian plans of aggression which seemed to leave their previous claims altogether in the shade.

3. Moreover, if the French did make any approach to the Italian Government, M. Daladier thought that the Italians would certainly interpret this, as it would certainly be represented by the press, as a new triumph for Italy, and it would have the worst possible effect upon public feeling in France. This feeling that was now strongly united would be discouraged, and dangerous doubts would be sown in the minds of the French Mahometan population in North Africa. M. Daladier was accordingly driven to the conclusion that

the Italians had no real desire to define their terms, but merely wanted to weaken the French morale. The situation, in his view, had not changed. The French were always ready, if the Italians showed clear indication of good faith and sincerity, to discuss these questions, and there had, indeed, been indirect soundings in the past, but nothing firm had ever emerged. M. Daladier had been good enough to say that he had confidence in the good faith and the judgment of His Majesty's Government, and he would accordingly be genuinely grateful if I could privately inform the Ambassador what had been at the back of our minds in instructing Your Excellency to approach him in the sense of the instructions that we had sent to you.

4. I told M. Corbin that I would readily tell him frankly what had been in our minds. I informed him of the substance of the telegrams I had received from Lord Perth, both that in which he gave me a personal account of a conversation between the Counsellor in Rome and a lady of British birth in touch with important political circles,¹ and that in which Lord Perth reported his farewell interview with Signor Mussolini.² I went on to say that the impression left on my own mind by these telegrams was that, while no one could, of course, feel at all certain of Italian sincerity and purpose, yet none the less there did appear to be a possibility of some genuine misunderstanding which, if it existed, it would obviously be desirable to remove. M. Corbin told me that the initiative for the conversation with M. Baudouin³ had come from some subordinate official in the Colonial Office in Rome, that the Italian *démarche* had been entirely unofficial in character, and had been made in such a way that it could easily be repudiated. When M. Baudouin had eventually been sent to Rome, he had been instructed to say that, if anything was to be made of the conversations, press attacks on France should cease. These attacks had shortly afterwards been resumed, and accordingly the whole matter had dropped.

5. I told M. Corbin that I readily realised the force of M. Daladier's general reasoning, as he had reported it, and it was obviously of the first importance that any action to be taken should have regard to the real dangers that M. Daladier apprehended. Nevertheless, I could not banish from my mind the thought that it might not be impossible that both things were true, namely, that there might be substance in the grandiose Italian plans of aggression prepared against certain hypothetical circumstances, of which the French Government claimed to have evidence, and, on the other hand, that there might also be genuine misunderstanding of the respective positions of the two Governments. As to the first, I thought there was—and M. Corbin agreed—a good deal of evidence to show that it was part of the technique of both the German and Italian Governments to encourage the people here and in France to believe that there were these dangerous plans in order to cause the greatest amount of anxiety, which was itself useful as a bargaining lever. But this did not make it less necessary to consider if there

¹ See No. 214.

² See No. 242.

³ See also Volume IV of this Series, No. 342, note 2.

were any real opportunity of improving the situation by the removal of misunderstandings, if these were, in fact, genuine. I accordingly asked the Ambassador to communicate in strict confidence to M. Daladier what I had said and to ask him, in the light of it, to consider whether any safe means might be found by which, while avoiding the obvious dangers, any genuine chance of improving Franco-Italian relations might not be missed. This M. Corbin promised to do.

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

No. 297

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora)

No. 204 [R 3128/661/67]

FOREIGN OFFICE, April 26, 1939

Sir,

In the course of a general conversation with Sir Lancelot Oliphant¹ on the 18th April, the Turkish Ambassador mentioned that he had recently had a talk with the Bulgarian Minister in London. He had emphasised to M. Momtchiloff his conviction that Turkey would always be found on the side of the United Kingdom, and that it was in Bulgaria's own interest to join with the Balkan Entente. He had expressed the hope that if Roumania would promise an alteration in the Bulgar-Roumanian frontier in principle, but not for immediate implementation, Bulgaria would accept. M. Momtchiloff had said that if the Balkan Entente were to declare their neutrality, a declaration of this kind would make such a course easier for the Government at Sofia.

2. The Ambassador then said that he felt sure that the Prince Regent of Yugoslavia had been unaware of Italian intentions in Albania until the last moment. In Dr. Aras' opinion it might quite well be true that Count Ciano had told the then Yugoslav Prime Minister some while ago of Italian intentions but that M. Stoyadinovitch, who had flirted with the idea of introducing a fascist régime into Yugoslavia, had not passed this information on to anyone. Dr. Aras thought it quite possible that the Prince Regent had rid himself of M. Stoyadinovitch's services because of these fascist propensities. The Ambassador appeared to base these views on a conversation which he had had quite recently with the new Yugoslav Minister to Angora, who passed through London on his way from Geneva to Turkey.

3. In conclusion Dr. Aras said that while he knew that His Majesty's Government and his Government saw eye to eye, he had not heard anything recently from Angora about European developments. He surmised that this was because they did not wish for duplication and felt sure that he would be having news from us. It was explained to Dr. Aras that there was nothing concrete at the moment to pass on to him, but that the whole political situation was constantly under review, and that so soon as there was anything definite to tell him, he could rely on this department to do so.

¹ Deputy Under-Secretary of State.

4. Copies of this despatch are being sent to His Majesty's Representatives at Athens, Belgrade, Bucharest, Durazzo, Rome and Sofia.

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

No. 298

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 27, 3.0 p.m.)
No. 189 Telegraphic [R 3350/7/22]

PARIS, April 27, 1939, 1.10 p.m.

My telegram No. 186.¹

I told the Minister for Foreign Affairs this morning that I hoped, now that we had adopted compulsory service, that a serious attempt would be made to establish contact between France and Italy.

2. M. Bonnet then, under the seal of secrecy and only for the information of Your Lordship and the Prime Minister, read me out a telegram from the French Ambassador at Rome, who saw Count Ciano, at the latter's request, on the evening of April 25 in order to sign an addition to a Commercial Treaty.

3. After the signature Count Ciano spoke in a most friendly way to M. François-Poncet, saying that the danger spot now seemed to be German-Polish relations, but that there was nothing that could not be settled amicably between France and Italy.

4. The French Ambassador asked what Italy really wanted and elicited the following:

- (1) Free port at Jibuti.
- (2) Share in Jibuti railway.
- (3) Two Italian directorships on Suez Canal Board.
- (4) Prolongation (*sic*)² of the 1896 Agreement regarding Tunis.³

5. Count Ciano added spontaneously that Italy had no territorial claims against France.

6. M. Bonnet is very pleased and asks me to tell M. Daladier how much importance His Majesty's Government attaches to the establishment of contact between France and Italy. I shall do this today as I am meeting M. Daladier at lunch but I shall not tell him that I already know of the above-mentioned conversation at Rome.

7. M. Bonnet admitted to me finally that he had already heard unofficially through M. Baudouin that this was the Italian attitude, but said that it was of course far more satisfactory to get a definite official pronouncement from Count Ciano.

¹ No. 259.

² This word appears in the file copy of this telegram.

³ This Convention is printed in *British and Foreign State Papers*, vol. 88, p. 720.

*Viscount Halifax to Sir S. Waterlow (Athens)**No. 181 [R 3237/661/67]*FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 27, 1939*

Sir,

As recorded in my telegram No. 116 of the 24th April to Belgrade,¹ the Greek Minister came to see a member of this department on the 22nd April to say that the Yugoslav Minister of Foreign Affairs had told the Greek Minister in Belgrade on the 20th and 21st April that in accepting the invitation of the Italian Foreign Minister to go to Venice he had no knowledge of what was going to be discussed apart from the Albanian situation. M. Markovitch did not, however, exclude the possibility of being asked to join the Axis or to strengthen the ties between Yugoslavia and Hungary. Nor was it out of the question that some proposal might be made to him for a four-Power agreement between Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Albania and Hungary. The Greek Minister, however, was assured by M. Markovitch that, while preserving the framework of most friendly relations with Italy, he would adopt an attitude of extreme reserve to the latter proposal if it were made.

2. M. Simopoulos then went on to say that he had received a telegram from the Greek Minister in Tirana which stated that Count Ciano in addressing the staff of the Albanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs had declared that Italy would ensure the appeasement of Albania and the realisation of Albania's national aims. The Greek Minister did not know precisely what those aims could be, and it was suggested to him that they might well be connected with the Albanian minorities at present beyond the borders of existing Albanian frontiers.

3. As regards the possibility of a four-Power agreement between Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Albania and Hungary, M. Simopoulos was told that this department had no confirmation of any such project. On the other hand the possibility of its being raised was by no means excluded.

4. M. Simopoulos seemed very perturbed about what he imagined would be the change in Bulgarian policy as a result of the Italian occupation of Albania. He was told that this department likewise thought that Bulgaria would be faced with some quick thinking and important decisions. As evidence of this, the Bulgarian Minister had been recalled to Sofia. The important thing, as it seemed here, was that there should be a solid Balkan *bloc* including Bulgaria to resist further encroachments by the Axis. His Majesty's Government did not, however, have any desire to meddle in Balkan politics. If such solidarity was to be created it must be created by the Balkans themselves. Clearly if such an aim was desirable in itself, then it would be worth certain risks and sacrifices to attain it. What those risks and sacrifices were was not for His Majesty's Government to advise. His Majesty's Government could only point to the risks they themselves had recently under-

¹ Not printed. This telegram informed Sir R. Campbell of that part of the conversation with M. Simopoulos recorded in the first paragraph of the despatch printed above.

taken in the general interest in the shape of guarantees to certain countries including Greece.

Copies of this despatch are being sent to His Majesty's Representatives at Belgrade, Angora, Sofia, Bucharest and Rome.

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

No. 300

Mr. Orde (Riga) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 11)
No. 168 [N 2392/64/63]

RIGA, April 27, 1939

His Majesty's Minister at Riga presents his compliments to His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and has the honour to transmit to him a copy of despatch No. 127 from Mr. Gallienne, Tallinn, dated the 21st April, respecting the Soviet Government's declaration concerning Estonian sovereignty and animosity in Estonia against Great Britain.

ENCLOSURE 1 IN NO. 300

Mr. Gallienne to Mr. Orde

(No. 127)

TALLINN, April 21, 1939

Sir,

On the 12th April I reported to you in a semi-official letter that I had heard that the Soviet Government had made a declaration that any threat to the sovereignty of Estonia would affect the interests of the Soviet Union and that the Soviet Government would take action. Today the Estonian Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs handed to me translations, in French, of the declaration made by the Soviet Government on the 28th March and the reply of the Estonian Government, dated the 7th April.

2. Copies of these two translations are enclosed.

3. The Assistant Minister handed these documents to me while I was in the room of the Head of the Political Department of the Foreign Ministry. The Head of the Political Department, M. Kaasik, asked me whether I was informed about the conversations going on at present between London and Moscow and if I knew whether these discussions affected the Baltic States. I replied that I knew nothing. M. Kaasik said that the Soviet declaration of the 28th March did not please the Estonian Government. They would prefer that the declaration and reply should be given full publicity, but M. Litvinov had objected to this, and had only consented to the texts being communicated to other Governments. It was alleged that the Soviet declaration had been made as a result of conversations with Mr. Hudson at Moscow. M. Kaasik

went on to say that there were numerous reports that the Soviet Government would give its military protection to the three Baltic States. Two of these reports had appeared in the Finnish press, both appearing as telegrams from the newspapers' own correspondents at Moscow. However, M. Kaasik knew that one of the correspondents resided at Riga and the other at Berlin.

4. I told M. Kaasik that during the last few days I had been somewhat perturbed at reports which reached me that there was animosity in Estonia against Great Britain. There was nothing in the press and I had heard nothing from any responsible Estonians, but I had an impression that there was a sort of 'whispering campaign' going on. I could understand that many people here must feel nervous on account of the conversations proceeding between London and Moscow which might have military significance, but the rumours went much further than that. For instance, I had heard that a report was being spread among the lower classes that Mr. Hudson had offered the Soviet Government a free hand in the Baltic States as an inducement to act with Great Britain against Germany. M. Kaasik said that there was undoubtedly Soviet propaganda going on among the working classes; but I replied that this did not look to me like the work of the Russians, since the effect was to stir up anti-British feelings. If these rumours were purposely being spread, then their source would rather appear to be Berlin. M. Kaasik said that this was a matter which would require investigation. He said that there was considerable nervousness, even among well-informed Estonians, regarding the Anglo-Russian consultations, and fear that the interests of the Baltic States might be overlooked. Estonia, he said, could never allow Soviet troops to enter her territory.

5. Estonia is in general very Anglophil, but I fear there is at present suspicion of Great Britain, and this may be being sedulously encouraged by other countries. It would be helpful if I could make some reassuring statement in an informal way.

I have, &c.,
W. H. GALLIENNE

ENCLOSURE 2 IN NO. 300

Declaration by the Soviet Government

(*Translation.*)

Le Traité de Paix soviéto-estonien du 2 février 1920,¹ ainsi que le Traité de Non-agression du 4 mai 1932,² présument l'acquisition par le peuple estonien et la conservation par lui de la pleine souveraineté et indépendance de son existence étatique, comme correspondant à la volonté du peuple estonien. C'est de la même présomption que partait le Gouvernement soviétique lorsqu'il mettait en vigueur, par anticipation, le pacte Briand-Kellogg,³

¹ This Treaty is printed in League of Nations Treaty Series, vol. xi, p. 30.

² This Treaty is printed in *British and Foreign State Papers*, vol. 135, p. 478.

³ The Pact of Paris of 1928 is printed *ibid.* vol. 128, p. 447.

lorsqu'il prolongeait pour dix ans la validité du Traité de Non-agression et, enfin, lorsqu'il assumait les obligations découlant du Pacte de la Société des Nations.

Le Gouvernement estonien sait quels efforts le Gouvernement soviétique a déployés au cours des quinze dernières années pour assurer l'inviolabilité des frontières de la République estonienne, en quoi il avait toujours été guidé par la même présomption. Il résulte de ce qui précède quelle immense importance le Gouvernement soviétique a invariablement attachée et continue à attacher au maintien de l'indépendance intégrale de la République estonienne ainsi que des autres républiques baltiques, ce qui correspond non seulement aux intérêts des peuples de ces républiques, mais également aux intérêts vitaux de l'État soviétique. De ceci, il doit aussi ressortir clairement que tout accord, quel qu'il soit, conclu 'librement' ou sous pression extérieure, qui aurait pour résultat même un amoindrissement ou une restriction de l'indépendance et de la souveraineté de la République estonienne, l'admission, chez elle, de la domination politique, économique ou autre de la part d'un tiers État, l'octroi à celui-ci des droits ou privilèges exclusifs quelconques, soit sur le territoire estonien, soit dans ses ports, serait considéré par le Gouvernement soviétique comme intolérable et incompatible avec les présomptions et l'esprit des traités et accords précités, qui règlent à l'heure actuelle ses rapports avec l'Estonie, et même comme une violation de ces accords, avec toutes les conséquences qui en découleraient.

La présente déclaration est faite dans un esprit de sincère bienveillance envers le peuple estonien et dans le but de renforcer chez lui le sentiment de sécurité et la certitude de la volonté de l'Union soviétique de démontrer en pratique, si besoin est, l'intérêt qu'elle attache à ce que la République estonienne maintienne intacte la souveraineté de son existence étatique et son indépendance politique et économique, ainsi que la certitude de l'impossibilité, pour l'Union soviétique, de rester passive vis-à-vis des tentatives de suppression ouverte ou masquée de cette souveraineté et indépendance.

MOSCOU, le 28 mars 1939.

ENCLOSURE 3 IN NO. 300

Note from the Estonian Government

(Translation.)

Le Gouvernement estonien a pris note avec une vive satisfaction de l'assurance du Gouvernement soviétique concernant sa sincère bienveillance envers le peuple estonien, ainsi que du fait qu'en contractant des engagements conventionnels avec l'Estonie il avait, constamment et à plusieurs reprises, pris pour point de départ la reconnaissance de la pleine souveraineté et indépendance de l'existence étatique du peuple estonien.

Dans la certitude inébranlable d'exprimer la volonté de la nation entière, le Gouvernement estonien déclare qu'à tout moment et avec toutes les forces

à sa disposition, le peuple estonien se tiendra à la garde de sa liberté nationale et de l'indépendance de son État. Suivant ce désir ferme et inflexible de la nation entière, le Gouvernement estonien n'a jamais consenti, et ne pourra consentir à l'avenir d'aucune façon, ni librement ni sous pression extérieure, à une restriction de l'indépendance de la République estonienne. Ferme-ment attaché à la politique de neutralité dans ses relations internationales, il n'a jamais admis et n'admettra jamais qu'une domination politique, écono-mique ou autre soit établie en Estonie, au préjudice de son indépendance, par un État étranger quel qu'il soit.

Tout en tenant compte de la circonstance que le maintien de la pleine indépendance de la République estonienne correspond aux intérêts vitaux de l'État soviétique, le Gouvernement estonien tient à déclarer de la façon la plus catégorique qu'à lui seul appartient le droit exclusif de juger dans quelle mesure les actes qu'il commet correspondent aux obligations internationales qu'il a assumées, et qu'il maintient, à l'égard de tous ses actes, son entière liberté de décision, étant prêt à défendre cette liberté et à porter l'entière responsabilité pour ses décisions. De même, l'Estonie ne saura partager avec aucun autre État son droit et son devoir de veiller à la défense de son indépendance nationale et de son infaillible neutralité.

Le Gouvernement estonien estime que par sa détermination de défendre, par ses propres forces et les armes en main, l'indépendance et la neutralité de l'Estonie contre toute atteinte possible, il satisfait en pleine mesure aux exigences de la sécurité dans la région baltique, et, par cela même, contribue de la meilleure façon à l'œuvre commune de paix, ainsi qu'à la stabilité et au développement, sous tous leurs aspects, des relations de bon voisinage avec l'U.R.S.S.

MOSCOU, le 7 avril 1939.

No. 301

Letter from Mr. Norton (Warsaw) to Mr. Strang

[C 6466/54/18]

BRITISH EMBASSY, WARSAW, April 27, 1939

We here are all rather appalled by the tone and substance of recent telegrams from Berlin. They produce the impression that our Embassy are falling for the Nazi propaganda stuff that Poland is a menace to peace. We know that some of the minor rabbit-like nations swallow this and regurgitate it. This is playing the German game and it is a very dangerous one. For peace cannot be ensured by *any* Polish concessions unless those concessions are made as between equals. If, for example, Beck were forced to make an unpopular concession the result in my view would be as follows. There would be a great outcry here and he would probably have to resign. If the Govern-ment decided to try and support him there would nevertheless be anti-Beck

and anti-German incidents and demonstrations on such a scale that 1. The Government would have to use troops to suppress them: i.e. civil war; and 2. The German minority would clamour for *German* protection and very likely get it.

It seems to me that that is exactly the kind of situation which our original proposals, defining the possible German methods of undermining her neighbours, were intended to forestall.

German talk of persecution of her minority in Poland is beside the point for this reason. What Hitler decides to do depends not on facts but on policy. When he decides to liquidate a country he manufactures an incident. I need not recall to you the occasions on which this has proved true. The story of the Sudeten Deutsch and of Slovakia is full of them. When his *policy* is peace he suppresses knowledge of real grievances, e.g. Sud Tirol, and Poland up to this year.

So for God's sake do not let us be led into the quagmire of whether or not a German has been socked in the jaw in this or that Polish town. From the point of view of European policy such an enquiry is *absolutely* meaningless—or rather it is sheer folly. The Poles will never let anyone send a Runciman. I do not for one moment suggest that negotiations over Danzig are unnecessary, and no one of us will ever encourage provocation or obstructiveness in the Poles.

But, I repeat, it seems to me most dangerous for Berlin to use the same language about Danzig as they did about Czecho-Slovakia a year ago. How much water has flowed under the bridges of the Vistula since then! If peace is saved it will be because Hitler is afraid of the war on both fronts simultaneously. If peace is *not* saved we urgently need a strong and united Poland. I am not complaining of British policy. Far from it. It seems to us exiles to be moving from strength to strength along slow but sure lines. But I earnestly hope that *no one* at home will be misled by false analogies, or temporary forgetfulness of recent events, or ignorance of the game of 'nerves' now being played in Europe—into thinking that we can *buy* even a short respite except at great cost.

And if the cost were that of letting the Poles down (remember that *they* are the judges) I do not think that any member of this Embassy could remain here. . . .¹ For the Poles (and we) quite understand what is liable to happen to them if war comes. But like Feeble (was it not?) they say 'A man can die but once, and we owe God a death'.

I am not feeling emotional. We play tennis every day and have parties almost every evening. Do come and see for yourself what a calm and healthy life we lead. And I can quite understand that in Berlin life is not conducive to critical thought. Poor devils!

But if we riposte strongly to Berlin telegrams you will understand why.

¹ A personal reference is here omitted.

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 28, 7.30 p.m.)
No. 174 Telegraphic [E 3450/9/44]

ANGORA, April 28, 1939, 2.44 p.m.

My telegram No. 125.¹

Herr von Papen arrived on April 27 and had a conversation with the Minister for Foreign Affairs of which the latter gave me the following account the same evening.

2. The German Ambassador began by stating that the German Government were partisans of peace. They would make the necessary settlement in Central Europe but they did not desire to control an inch of territory. They wanted peace and nothing but peace.

3. Relations with Poland had been very good until Poland received British support. Poland must be friendly either with Germany or with the Soviets. On account of Communism friendship with Soviets was impossible for her and she must live on good terms with Germany. Germany asked nothing of Poland except Danzig (with every condition to amplify [*sic* ? satisfy] Poland's needs) and an 'autostrade'.

4. As regards Czecho-Slovakia Herr Hitler had already made it clear at Munich that he could not tolerate the military threat in the heart of Germany which Czecho-Slovakia constituted.

5. As regards France Herr Hitler had said that for centuries Franco-German hostility had greatly harmed Germany. Germany wished at all costs sincerely to reconcile herself with France. Not only did Germany wish to make no further moves but she did not wish to encourage others to do so, for instance Hungary and Bulgaria. On the contrary Germany was restraining them.

6. The Axis was solid but it was Germany who 'called the tune and time'. Italy had seen that Germany had done everything and Italy nothing. Italy had occupied Albania because she wanted something to show. Germany liked Turks and so long as Turkey was Germany's friend no one, especially Italy, could do anything against Turkey.

7. The Minister for Foreign Affairs interrupted Herr von Papen at this point to say that Turkey did not appreciate dependence on the friendship of others, and enquired whether the German Ambassador meant that if Turkey was not on friendly terms with Germany, Italy would attack her? Herr von Papen excused himself and said he had expressed himself badly and had meant no such thing.

8. The Minister for Foreign Affairs went on to say [that] the German Ambassador could be sure of one thing—Turkey was not afraid of the Italians. If

¹ Not printed. This telegram of April 13 reported the Turkish agreement to the appointment of Herr von Papen as German Ambassador at Angora. Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen said that the Turkish consent had been given 'without enthusiasm'.

they came along Turkey was certain of a happy conclusion. The Italians might be more numerous and stronger but against this Turkey had two advantages. (i) the Italians would be far from their base and (ii) 'they have their Italians and we have our Turks'.

9. Herr von Papen then gave further pacific assurances and added that Germany desires nothing from Turkey except economic conditions. He asked what was the truth of press reports regarding negotiations for a non-aggression pact. He could not conceal that British policy of assurances and counter-assurances, in one word of encirclement, 'irritated' Germany and if ever this encirclement became a *fait accompli* through an agreement between Turkey, Soviet Government and His Majesty's Government he greatly feared that their ardent partisan of peace, Herr Hitler, would find himself in an extraordinary state of exasperation.

10. Minister for Foreign Affairs replied that the ardent desire of the Turkish Government was equally to preserve peace. But Turkish Government had been worried by two recent events: (1) Ultimatum to Roumania. This had vanished within forty-eight hours, which had consoled them. (2) The occupation of Albania. Albania was a very poor country and Italian occupation would only prove expensive. Turkish Government had therefore been inclined to regard Albanian move as part of a concerted plan by the Axis Powers and to consider that the time had come for Turkey to protect herself against surprises. Since then Turkey had been in contact with friendly countries and exchanges of views were in progress. At present there was no signed or initialled agreement and it could not be said that there were official conversations. But these countries were concerting together and close contact continued.

11. Herr von Papen enquired what Germany could do to reassure Turkey. The Minister for Foreign Affairs replied that the period of words was already over. German Ambassador then suggested that Signor Mussolini might make a declaration of friendship with Turkey. Minister for Foreign Affairs replied that such a thing would 'displease Turkey enormously'. German Ambassador thereupon gave every assurance of German and Italian good intentions. Minister for Foreign Affairs then asked three questions: (1) Does Germany approve existence and strengthening of the Balkan Entente? Herr von Papen replied that Germany approved entirely. (2) Did Germany and Italy intend to proceed further in the Balkans? Herr von Papen replied 'jamais de la vie'. (3) Did Germany intend to start a war in the Mediterranean? German Ambassador replied 'Never'.

12. Minister for Foreign Affairs then said that Germans could sleep quietly in their beds because Germans had no intention of seeking adventures elsewhere. German Ambassador tried to convince him of Italian good intentions. Minister for Foreign Affairs observed that so long as Italy went on fortifying and reinforcing islands and since Italy had occupied Albania which was a vital point for Turkey, no verbal assurances would satisfy Turkey.

13. I am impressed with the manner in which the German Ambassador seems to have acted as spokesman for the Italian Government. My Italian

colleague went on leave a few days ago, remarking that there was nothing for him to do here.

Please repeat to Paris.¹

Repeated to Rome, Warsaw, Athens, Belgrade, Bucharest and Sofia.

¹ A copy of this telegram was sent by bag from the Foreign Office to Paris.

No. 303

*Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 28, 7.30 p.m.)
No. 191 Telegraphic [C 6162/15/18]*

PARIS, April 28, 1939, 6.15 p.m.

M. Daladier informs me that he is convinced that Herr Hitler, whatever he may pretend, has been greatly impressed by conscription in Great Britain, and that without that measure his speech this morning would have been worse.

2. M. Daladier is going to urge United States Ambassador today to use all his influence with President Roosevelt to modify substantially and immediately Neutrality Act.¹ The President had always given as an excuse for not doing so that Great Britain did not mean business otherwise she would adopt conscription.

3. M. Daladier thinks it might be advisable if His Majesty's Government acted in a similar sense at Washington.

4. All I meet express admiration for the momentous decision taken by His Majesty's Government and all, including representatives of the French Left, such as M. Delbos, deplore the inconceivably foolish and unpatriotic attitude of our Opposition. M. Blum spoke very contemptuously to M. Delbos on the subject only this morning.

¹ With reference to this point, Sir A. Cadogan wrote to Sir E. Phipps in an undated letter, 'Our view is that it would be unwise for us to act upon M. Daladier's suggestion at a time when the question is under discussion in Congress, with whom rests the power to enact new legislation of a more favourable character than that now in force; such as, for example, the Pittman bill, known to be favoured by President Roosevelt, which applies the cash and carry provisions to munitions. We are sure that the United States Ambassador here would not welcome an appeal of this kind, which could hardly fail to be embarrassing, both to himself and to the President, who can be counted upon to do what he can to assist us in a matter which is after all a problem of United States domestic policy. We cannot help feeling that M. Daladier has shown a misunderstanding of American psychology and constitutional procedure if he has taken the action recorded in paragraph 2 of your telegram.' Sir E. Phipps replied on May 10, 'Daladier did not after all press Bullitt to urge the President at once to modify the Neutrality Act. As a matter of fact it would not have mattered greatly if he had, for Bill Bullitt would certainly have refused to pass on the message to the President and would have given Daladier his reasons for declining. I have often discussed the matter with Bullitt, who is as anxious as any of us that the Neutrality Act should be quickly amended in the sense desired, as indeed is the President himself. Not that Bullitt or Mr. Roosevelt have the slightest doubt but that a week after German bombs fell on Paris or London the "cash and carry" provisions would be applied to munitions of war, &c. The point, of course, is that if the necessary amendment were made here and now to the Act it might just tip the balance in favour of peace by showing the true position to the Germans.'

*Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) and Sir R. Hoare
(Bucharest)*

No. 128¹ Telegraphic [C 5838/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, April 28, 1939, 7.0 p.m.

Conversations are still proceeding between His Majesty's Government and the Soviet Government with the object of securing some form of association of the Soviet Government with the efforts which His Majesty's Government are making to resist further aggression.

2. His Majesty's Government are trying to reconcile the following considerations:

(a) not to forego the chance of our receiving help from the Soviet Government in case of war;

(b) not to jeopardise the common front by disregarding the susceptibilities of Poland and Roumania;

(c) not to forfeit the sympathy of the world at large by giving a handle to Germany's anti-Comintern propaganda;

(d) not to jeopardise the cause of peace by provoking violent action by Germany.

3. Proposals have been made by the Soviet Government and the French Government which seem to His Majesty's Government to be open to the objection that they run counter to some of the foregoing principles. His Majesty's Government accordingly still consider that something on the lines of their original proposal (my telegram to Moscow No. 71²) is the one best calculated to meet this complicated situation.

4. In order to make the nature and purpose of their proposal clear, and in order in some degree to meet the views of the French and Soviet Governments, I am proposing to the French Government that it should be revised on the following lines.

5. The Soviet Government would make a public declaration on their own initiative in which, after referring to the general statement of policy recently made by M. Stalin, and having regard to statements recently made by His Majesty's Government and the French Government accepting new obligations on behalf of certain Eastern European countries, the Soviet Government would undertake that in the event of Great Britain and France being involved in hostilities in fulfilment of these obligations, the assistance of the Soviet Government would be available, if desired, and would be afforded in such manner as would be found most convenient.

6. This proposal, I think, does take due account of the susceptibilities of Poland and Roumania. Neither country is mentioned by name; the Soviet declaration if Soviet Government were willing to make it would, in form, be

¹ No. 128 to Warsaw; No. 165 to Bucharest.

² No. 170.

unilateral, and the assistance of the Soviet Government would only be made available if desired.

7. (*To Warsaw only*). I shall be glad if you will let the Minister for Foreign Affairs know the general lines upon which His Majesty's Government are proceeding, and if you will report any comments he may make. You should not expressly ask for his assent.

7. (*To Bucharest only*). I explained to the Minister for Foreign Affairs during his visit here the intentions of His Majesty's Government in this matter, and he appeared to raise no objection to the course which they were pursuing. I shall be glad if you will let the Secretary-General know the general lines upon which His Majesty's Government are proceeding, and if you will report any comments he may make. You should not expressly ask for his assent.

Repeated to Paris, Moscow, Angora, Berlin, Helsingfors and Riga.

No. 305

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)

No. 186 Telegraphic [C 5838/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 28, 1939, 7.0 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 188.¹

1. Tripartite agreement proposed by the French Government seems to His Majesty's Government to raise serious difficulty.

2. Proposal to make Tripartite Agreement in the sense that Russia should assist France and Great Britain if latter found themselves at war in fulfilment of engagements undertaken towards Eastern European countries must surely involve at least indirect Soviet assistance to Poland, since *ex hypothesi* Great Britain and France would already be assisting Poland against Germany. This proposal seems therefore plainly open to the objection strongly stated by the French Government themselves in paragraph (a) of your telegram under reference. It is for this reason that it seems of such great importance so as to [*sic*] shape any arrangement as to make it clear that Soviet assistance should only be given if desired and in the most convenient form. I put this suggestion to the Roumanian Foreign Minister on April 25, and he appeared to raise no objection to it, though I think he would prefer that no specific mention should be made of any State by name. I should have hoped that this might also be position of Polish Government.

3. Proposal that Great Britain and France should in given circumstances undertake to assist Soviet Russia if latter, as a result of help given by her to Great Britain and France, should find herself at war with Germany seems to me unnecessary, since *ex hypothesi* Great Britain and France would already be at war with Germany. They would accordingly be deploying their maximum effort in whatever field this effort could best be made and could not do more.

4. Policy which His Majesty's Government are pursuing in their approach

¹ No. 277.

to the Soviet Government is designed to try and reconcile following considerations:—(a) not to forego the chance of our receiving help from the Soviet Government in case of war; (b) not to jeopardise the common front by disregarding the susceptibilities of Poland and Roumania; (c) not to forfeit sympathy of the world at large by giving a handle to Germany's anti-Comintern propaganda; (d) not to jeopardise the cause of peace by provoking violent action by Germany.

5. For these reasons His Majesty's Government still think that something on the lines of their original proposal (my telegram to Moscow No. 71²) is the one best calculated to meet this very complicated situation.

6. In order to make nature and purpose of our proposal clear, and in order in some degree to meet the views of the French Government, I would now suggest that it should be re-drafted to read as follows.

'It is suggested that the Soviet Government should make a public declaration on their own initiative in which, after referring to the general statement of policy recently made by M. Stalin, and having regard to statements recently made by His Majesty's Government and the French Government accepting new obligations on behalf of certain Eastern European countries, the Soviet Government would undertake that in the event of Great Britain and France being involved in hostilities in fulfilment of these obligations, the assistance of the Soviet Government would be available, if desired, and would be afforded in such manner as would be found most convenient.'

7. French Government will observe that our draft meets two principal points to which they with us attach importance.

First, it will not, as we should hope, prejudice position in Poland and Roumania.

Second, it does in fact give Russia reciprocal assurance of common action since declaration we would suggest to be made by Soviet Government only places them under conditional obligation, in case where *ex hypothesi* France and Great Britain are already engaged.

8. Please put these considerations to the French Government and inform them that I am communicating to the Polish and Roumanian Governments for their comments (though without asking for their assent) an outline of the course now proposed by His Majesty's Government.

² No. 170.

No. 306

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 28, 7.28 p.m.)

No. 335 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 6163/15/18]

BERLIN, April 28, 1939

Herr Hitler's two and quarter hours speech in the Reichstag today¹ was truculent and uncompromising. As an oratorical achievement for the benefit

¹ For the main points of this speech see No. 314.

of a German public whose knowledge of facts is derived from the Minister of Propaganda it could hardly have been bettered and will undoubtedly create a deep impression in this country. In itself however speech contained little or nothing of a constructive character and far from improving the atmosphere, has, particularly by reason of the strong attack on Poland culminating in abrogation of German-Polish Agreement, definitely aggravated an already serious situation. His bitter references to Poland were received with real hostility to that country on the part of his audience. Ridicule and cheap debating points constituted the burden of his reply to President Roosevelt.

As regards Anglo-German relations his attack on Great Britain took the form of denunciation of Anglo-German Naval Agreement and repudiation of British interference in affairs which were claimed to be of purely German interest. Although he reiterated his claims for the return of German colonies which he said would never be a cause of war he nevertheless declared desire expressed on previous occasions for friendly relations with Great Britain provided German rights received full recognition.

No. 307

Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)

No. 849 [A 3092/1/45]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 28, 1939*

Sir,

The German Chargé d'Affaires (who had been unable to accept an appointment at the hour I had designated) called on a member of this department at noon on April 28 to deliver the annexed memorandum from the German Government on the subject of the Anglo-German Naval Agreement.

2. Dr. Kordt said that this memorandum would be published in the German evening newspapers on that day.

3. He added that the German Government thought it so important that the text of the speech which was being delivered by Herr Hitler that morning should reach foreign Governments and the foreign press in an accurate form, that they had had an English translation made. Copies of this translation were being given to the press agencies in London, and he communicated copies for the use of the Foreign Office, for which he was thanked.

4. Dr. Kordt was told that I would be informed of his communication, and that no comment could, of course, be made on it at the present stage.

I am, &c.,

HALIFAX

ENCLOSURE IN No. 307

Memorandum

BERLIN, *April 27, 1939*

(*Translation.*)

When in the year 1935 the German Government made the British Government the offer to bring the strength of the German fleet to a fixed proportion

of the strength of the naval forces of the British Empire by means of a Treaty, it did so on the basis of the firm conviction that for all time the recurrence of a warlike conflict between Germany and Great Britain was excluded. In voluntarily recognising the priority of British interests at sea through the offer of the ratio 100:35 it believed that, by means of this decision, unique in the history of the Great Powers, it was taking a step which would lead to the establishment of a friendly relationship for all time between the two nations. This step on the part of the German Government was naturally conditional on the British Government for their part also being determined to adopt a political attitude which would assure a friendly development of Anglo-German relations.

On this basis and under these conditions was the Anglo-German Naval Agreement of the 18th June, 1935,¹ brought into being. This was expressed in agreement by both parties on the conclusion of the Agreement.² Moreover, last autumn after the Munich Conference the German Chancellor and the British Prime Minister solemnly confirmed in the Declaration, which they signed, that they regarded the Agreement as symbolical of the desire of both peoples never again to wage war on one another.

The German Government has always adhered to this wish and is still today inspired by it. It is conscious of having acted accordingly in its policy and of having in no case intervened in the sphere of English interests or of having in any way encroached on these interests. On the other hand it must to its regret take note of the fact that the British Government of late is departing more and more from the course of an analagous policy towards Germany. As is clearly shown by the political decisions made known by the British Government in the last weeks as well as by the inspired anti-German attitude of the English press, the British Government is now governed by the opinion that England, in whatever part of Europe Germany might be involved in warlike conflict, must always take up an attitude hostile to Germany, even in a case where English interests are not touched in any way by such a conflict. The British Government thus regards war by England against Germany no longer as an impossibility, but on the contrary as a capital problem of English foreign policy.

By means of this encirclement policy the British Government has unilaterally deprived the Naval Agreement of the 18th June, 1935, of its basis, and has thus put out of force this Agreement as well as the complementary declaration of the 17th July, 1937.³

The same applies to Part III of the Anglo-German Naval Agreement of the 17th July, 1937,³ in which the obligation is laid down to make a mutual Anglo-German exchange of information. The execution of this obligation rests naturally on the condition that a relationship of open confidence should exist between two partners. Since the German Government to its regret can

¹ Printed in Cmd. 4953 of 1935.

² In the original this sentence reads: 'Das ist von beiden Seiten beim Abschluss des Abkommens übereinstimmend zum Ausdruck gebracht worden'.

³ Printed in Cmd. 5637 of 1938.

no longer regard this relationship as existing, it must also regard the provisions of Part III referred to above as having lapsed.

The qualitative provisions of the Anglo-German Agreement of the 17th July, 1937, remain unaffected by these observations which have been forced upon the German Government against its will. The German Government will abide by these provisions also in the future and so make its contribution to the avoidance of a general unlimited race in the naval armaments of the nations.

Moreover, the German Government, should the British Government desire to enter into negotiations with Germany, in regard to the future problems here arising, is gladly ready to do so. It would welcome it if it then proved possible to reach a clear and categorical understanding on a sure basis.

No. 308

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax
(Received May 9)

No. 219 [R 3786/661/67]

ANGORA, April 28, 1939

His Majesty's Representative in Turkey presents his compliments to His Majesty's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and with reference to Angora telegram No. 163¹ has the honour to transmit herewith copy of a letter from the Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs.

¹ No. 286.

ENCLOSURE IN NO. 308

ANKARA, le 25 avril 1939

Mon cher Ambassadeur,

J'ai l'honneur d'accuser réception à Votre Excellence de la lettre en date du 20 avril 1939 par laquelle Elle a bien voulu me faire connaître la réponse du Gouvernement de Sa Majesté Britannique relative à ma communication orale du 15 avril qui répondait elle-même aux propositions faites par le Gouvernement Britannique au sujet des garanties mutuelles turco-anglaises en cas de guerre.

C'est avec une attention toute particulière que le Gouvernement de la République a considéré la teneur de la réponse du Gouvernement Britannique. Je me permets de faire ressortir ici les points essentiels de cette réponse tels que je les ai compris et exposés aux membres du Cabinet:

Le Gouvernement Britannique envisagerait l'assistance mutuelle turco-anglaise de la manière suivante:

I.—Toute guerre, déclenchée à la suite d'une agression commise par les Puissances de l'Axe et impliquant la participation de l'Italie de manière à avoir pour effet d'entraîner l'Angleterre ou la Turquie dans la guerre contre

cette dernière Puissance, serait nécessairement considérée comme une guerre méditerranéenne et déclencherait par cela même le jeu de l'assistance turco-britannique. Plus précisément, toute guerre turco-italienne ou anglo-italienne entraînerait la collaboration turco-britannique.

II.—Toute guerre engagée à la suite d'une agression des Puissances de l'Axe et s'étendant aux Balkans entraînerait le déclenchement de l'assistance mutuelle entre la Turquie et la Grande-Bretagne.

III.—Seraient conclus parallèlement à l'accord turco-anglais une assistance anglo-soviétique ainsi qu'un accord turco-soviétique conçu dans le même esprit que celui projeté entre la Turquie et la Grande-Bretagne.

IV.—La Turquie et l'Angleterre continueraient leurs efforts parallèles en vue de régler le différend bulgare-roumain et d'assurer, si possible, la participation ou, pour le moins, la neutralisation de la Bulgarie.

V.—La Turquie ayant des intérêts primordiaux au point de vue économique et en ce qui concerne les armements à sauvegarder en Allemagne et d'autre part, la défense terrestre des Détroits étant de la plus grande importance pour l'efficacité de l'assistance mutuelle turco-britannique, des conversations seraient immédiatement engagées à Londres en vue de régler l'aide britannique à la Turquie dans les domaines économiques, financiers, de fournitures militaires de différentes sortes ainsi que pour fixer les modalités de l'assistance effective en présence de différentes probabilités.

VI.—Les conditions ci-dessus exposées étant remplies un traité d'assistance mutuelle d'un caractère durable serait conclu entre la Turquie et l'Angleterre, ratifié par les deux Parlements et rendu ainsi public sans nulle clause secrète sauf les accords d'État-Major.

De nos différentes conversations ainsi que des textes échangés à ce sujet telles sont les conclusions que j'ai pu tirer.

Toutefois, en ce qui concerne l'alinéa II, je voudrais apporter une précision à la proposition contenue dans votre lettre.

Je proposerais de formuler l'alinéa II ci-dessus mentionné de la manière suivante:

'II.—Toute guerre, engagée à la suite d'une agression des Puissances de l'Axe et s'étendant aux Balkans de manière à menacer la sécurité de la Turquie, entraînerait le déclenchement de l'assistance mutuelle entre la Turquie et la Grande-Bretagne.'

J'espère, mon cher Ambassadeur, qu'il y a sur ces compréhensions identité de vues entre les deux Gouvernements et que le Gouvernement Britannique voudra convenir de la nécessité de la précision apportée à l'alinéa II. S'il en est ainsi j'ai l'honneur de porter à la connaissance de Votre Excellence que le Gouvernement de la République exprime son accord de principe à cet effet et qu'il va déléguer des experts qualifiés pour traiter les questions mentionnées dans l'alinéa V avec les experts britanniques.

Il attendra, d'autre part, le résultat des pourparlers anglo-soviétiques, ayant lui-même pris contact avec le Gouvernement de l'U.R.S.S. sur cette même question par rapport à son aspect turco-soviétique.

Dès à présent le Gouvernement Turc est d'accord pour déclarer, si le besoin s'en fait sentir, que les Gouvernements Turc et Anglais sont en consultation étroite et que les discussions en cours entre eux révèlent leur identité de vue habituelle.

Veuillez agréer, &c.,
S. SARACOGU

No. 309

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 30, 9.30 a.m.)
No. 130 Telegraphic [C 6221/54/18]

WARSAW, April 29, 1939, 9.47 p.m.

Polish press today publishes the text of German Note handed to Polish Government at midday yesterday stating that Polish Government has unilaterally rendered Polish-German pact of 1934 null and void.

Text follows by post.¹

Repeated to Berlin.

¹ Not printed. The text of the German memorandum handed to the Polish Government on April 28 is printed as document No. 213 in the German White Book, 'Dokumente zur Vorgeschichte des Krieges', Auswärtiges Amt No. 2, Berlin, 1939.

No. 310

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora)
No. 144 Telegraphic [R 3325/661/67]

FOREIGN OFFICE, April 29, 1939, 11.0 p.m.

Your telegram No. 163.¹

Please inform Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs that I am most grateful for communication made to you on April 25 as set forth in your telegram under reference and further explained in your telegrams Nos. 164² and 167³ of April 26. It is gratifying to find that there is so large a measure of agreement between us.

2. As regards Point 1 of paragraph 1 of your telegram No. 163, His Majesty's Government and the Turkish Government are clearly in agreement, if it can be assumed that the words 'last named Power' refer to Italy. I gather, however, from the fact that no mention is made of it in your telegram No. 163 and subsequent telegrams, that the Turkish Government regards an immediate public declaration as no longer necessary. His Majesty's Government, however, consider that the general situation remains such as to make it desirable to strengthen the peace front against aggression. They submit therefore for the consideration of the Turkish Government a form of declaration the text of which is contained in my immediately following telegram⁴ and which in their opinion it might, if the Turkish Government agree, be

¹ No. 286.

² No. 287.

³ No. 291.

⁴ No. 311.

desirable to make public by both Governments simultaneously in the near future. His Majesty's Government are, however, sensible of what may be an important objection to this procedure, i.e. that the reference in such a declaration to the Mediterranean only might be thought to take no account of the dangers inherent in the Balkan situation and thus to lead to undesirable reactions not only in the Balkans but elsewhere.

3. It will be observed that this text, which is modelled on the text of the statement issued at the conclusion of the recent conversations with the Polish Minister for Foreign Affairs, refers only to the Mediterranean and would thus leave the way clear for the development of Turkey's negotiations with the Soviet Government on the one hand and her Balkan allies and Bulgaria on the other. Paragraph 3 of this declaration is intended to cover point 1 of paragraph 1 of your telegram under reference and to have the same meaning and effect.

4. I notice from paragraph 2 of your telegram No. 163 that to the definition given in Point 2 of paragraph 1 of that telegram of the circumstances entailing mutual assistance which at present runs as follows:

'Any war resulting from an aggression by Axis Powers and spreading to the Balkans would bring mutual assistance between Turkey and Great Britain into operation'

Turkish Government wish to insert after 'Balkans' the qualifying words 'in such way as to threaten the security of Turkey'. This in effect would seem to confine Turkish intervention only to an eventuality when she considered her security threatened. His Majesty's Government have of course, as announced on April 13 in Parliament, given an unilateral guarantee to Greece and Roumania to the effect that 'in the event of any action being taken which clearly threatened the independence of Greece or Roumania and which the Greek or Roumanian Government respectively considered it vital to resist with their national forces, His Majesty's Government would feel themselves bound at once to lend the Greek or Roumanian Government all the support in their power.' This guarantee would in fact be brought into operation by just such a set of circumstances as is precisely covered by the unamended wording of Point 2 of paragraph 1 of your telegram No. 163 and would thus entail 'mutual assistance between Turkey and Great Britain'. Such mutual assistance, however, would not necessarily be obligatory, if the above-mentioned Turkish addition were adopted. His Majesty's Government would therefore much prefer the unamended wording and trust that the Turkish Government will not insist on their suggested addition.

5. As regards Point (3) of paragraph 1, the Turkish Government seem to be under some misapprehension. His Majesty's Government have no intention of concluding a bi-lateral agreement of mutual assistance with the Soviet Government. The present state of their conversations with the Soviet Government and the considerations which underlie our policy have been conveniently outlined in my telegram to Warsaw No. 128,⁵ which has been

⁵ No. 304.

repeated to you. You may inform the Turkish Foreign Minister, in strict confidence, of the contents of that telegram. We have, as he will see, in dealing with the Soviet Government, thought it essential to take careful account of the susceptibilities of the Polish and Roumanian Governments, and no doubt the Turkish Government will bear in mind the possible reactions of the Roumanian Government when they discuss matters with the Soviet Government.

6. There is clearly complete agreement between our two Governments as to Points 4 and 5, i.e., joint endeavours to ensure if possible the participation or at least the neutrality of Bulgaria on the one hand and Staff conversations on the other. With regard to British assistance in the economic and financial spheres, however, the Turkish Government will be only too well aware from the recent budget statement in the House of Commons, that His Majesty's Government have their own financial difficulties.

7. With regard to Point 6, I am not quite certain as to the implication of the words 'above conditions having been fulfilled'. At first sight they would seem to postpone the conclusion of the prospective treaty to such time, for example, as Turkey had completed her negotiations with the Soviet Government or until Bulgarian participation and neutrality had been ensured or Turkey felt satisfied that all her requirements under Point 5 of your telegram No. 163 had been met. I cannot but feel that, if this interpretation is correct, undue delays might hinder the completion of the treaty which I am sure it is as much the desire as it is to the interests of both Governments to conclude as soon as possible.

8. The course therefore that His Majesty's Government would favour is a procedure by the following stages:

Stage 1.

The issue of a joint declaration in the sense of my immediately following telegram, should the two Governments on closer examination of the difficulties alluded to in paragraph 2 above consider this desirable.

Stage 2.

The negotiation in Angora of an interim understanding as soon as possible after the issue of such a declaration. The eventual publication of all or any of the contents of the interim understanding is a question which might be left for discussion at a later date. In the event of Stage 1 being adopted this understanding would be principally directed to cover Points 2 to 5 of paragraph 1 of your telegram No. 163 and might be drafted in the light of paragraph 6 of your telegram No. 167. If on the other hand our two Governments come to the conclusion that no joint declaration of the nature suggested is desirable, the interim agreement would then have to cover Point 1 of paragraph 1 of your telegram No. 163. In this connexion I would lay particular stress on our wish that the wording of Point 2 in paragraph 1 of your telegram No. 163 should not be weakened by the additional phrase suggested in paragraph 2 of the same telegram.

Stage 3.

Concurrently, if desired, with Stage 2 the meeting of experts in London to deal with all questions in Point 5 of paragraph 1 of your telegram No. 163, always bearing in mind the difficulties alluded to in paragraph 6 above.

Stage 4.

The negotiation in Angora of the treaty foreshadowed in paragraph 2 of the proposed declaration.

9. I will send you as soon as possible the draft of an interim understanding for Stage 2 on the lines suggested under that heading in the preceding paragraph.

Repeated to Paris, Rome, Bucharest, Warsaw, Athens, Sofia, Belgrade and Moscow.

No. 311

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora)

No. 145 Telegraphic [R 3325/661/67]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 29, 1939, 11.0 p.m.*

My immediately preceding telegram.¹

Following is text of proposed declaration:

'His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom and the Turkish Government have been in close consultation, and the discussions which have taken place between them, and are continuing, have revealed their customary identity of views.

'2. It is agreed that the two countries will enter into an agreement of a permanent and reciprocal character in the interests of their security.

'3. Pending the completion of the permanent agreement, His Majesty's Government and the Turkish Government declare that they are prepared to lend each other all the support in their power in the event of an act of aggression leading to war in the Mediterranean.

'4. This declaration, like the proposed agreement, would not be directed against any other country, but would be designed to assure Great Britain and Turkey of mutual assistance should the necessity arise.

'5. It is recognised by the two Governments that certain matters, including a more precise definition of the various ways in which the necessity for such assistance might arise, will require further examination before the permanent agreement can be completed. This examination is proceeding.

'6. It is understood that the arrangements above mentioned do not preclude either Government from making agreements with other countries in the general interests of the consolidation of peace.'

Repeated to Paris, Rome, Bucharest, Warsaw, Athens, Sofia, Belgrade and Moscow.

¹ No. 310.

Viscount Halifax to Sir W. Seeds (Moscow)
No. 94 Telegraphic [C 5460/15/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 29, 1939, 11.30 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 69.¹

1. His Majesty's Government have considered the latest Soviet proposal and are in consultation with the French Government as to the reply to be returned to it. They are also, as you will see from my telegram No. 128 to Warsaw,² in communication with the Polish and Roumanian Governments. I hope to be able to send you instructions before very long. Meanwhile, I would ask you to clear up with M. Litvinov the misunderstanding referred to in your telegram No. 68.³

2. I do not recall having put to the Soviet Ambassador on April 11 a direct question as to what form of assistance the Soviet Government could give to Roumania. Nor was I conscious that the Soviet Ambassador regarded himself as giving a reply to a specific question of mine when, on April 14, he informed me that the Soviet Government were prepared to take part in giving assistance to Roumania and asked our views as to the best methods by which such assistance could be given and as to the part the various Powers concerned could play in helping Roumania.

3. I did not think it necessary to discuss with him in detail at that stage the answer to these enquiries of his, since his communication to me had synchronised with a new suggestion of my own (communicated to you in my telegram No. 71⁴ and summarised by me to the Ambassador) which it seemed to me might bridge the differences between the points of view of the two Governments.

4. I do not understand why, as reported in paragraph 2 of your telegram No. 68, Soviet Government should affect to believe that His Majesty's Government are not committed by the declarations they have made to Poland and Roumania. The language of those declarations (as also of the declaration to Greece) makes it clear that in the event of any action being taken which clearly threatened the independence of these countries and which the latter considered it vital to resist, His Majesty's Government would feel themselves bound at once to lend them all the support in their power. The first condition is that there should be resistance to a clear threat to national independence. If such resistance were offered, His Majesty's Government would intervene.

5. It was on the strength of that definite commitment on our part that I suggested that the Soviet Government should for their part make the declaration which I have proposed to them.

¹ No. 201.

² No. 304.

³ No. 196.

⁴ No. 170.

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 30, 9.30 a.m.)
No. 338 Telegraphic [C 6231/15/18]

BERLIN, April 29, 1939, 11.45 p.m.

My telegram No. 335.¹

Careful perusal of text of Herr Hitler's speech induces me to make the following comment:

Crux is whether it is to be taken at its face value, having regard to implications which may lie behind it.

Speech for instance clearly announces on the credit side that Herr Hitler has not yet abandoned his original desire for good relations with Great Britain (see in this connexion last paragraph of my telegram No. 330²). The price of good relations is, as always in the past, stated to be recognition of German interests, with new additional condition of the abandonment of encirclement policy; repudiation of Anglo-German Naval Treaty ascribed to the recent adoption by Great Britain of the latter policy.

Thus all is made to depend on what Herr Hitler now regards or may regard in the future as German interests (I venture in this connexion to draw your attention to my despatch No. 315³ of March 9 which was written prior to the Prague coup).

Return of Danzig and untrammelled railway and motor connexion between East Prussia and the rest of the Reich is one of German interests in Eastern Europe actually specified yesterday by Herr Hitler.

General impression derived from the speech is that Herr Hitler does not desire war; at any rate for the moment, though he may risk it if his offer to Poland is uncompromisingly rejected. On the other hand implication may well be that Herr Hitler wishes to seek to strike a bargain with England for the mere purpose of securing period of truce during which he may hope to disintegrate the present Coalition against him and fortify his own position by consolidation of his recent acquisitions.

Similar doubt must necessarily exist in Polish minds. On the face of it Danzig is practically wholly a German city and its restoration to the Reich had already been largely discounted as ultimately inevitable.

Nor, if regarded objectively, is the demand for extra-territorial rail and road communication with East Prussia other than comprehensible desire on the part of German Government. Implication on the other hand is that such arrangement would constitute merely first step towards later and more far-reaching action against Poland on the lines of the Prague coup.

It must be admitted that, in addition, Herr Hitler gives non-aggression guarantees, if sought by countries concerned, to all the threatened states

¹ No. 306.

² Not printed. This telegram reported briefly a conversation between Sir N. Henderson and the editor of the 'Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung'.

³ See Volume IV of this Series, No. 195.

enumerated in President Roosevelt's list. Herr Hitler's offer (a) to replace Anglo-German Naval Treaty by a fresh armament agreement with Great Britain and (b) to negotiate new agreement with Poland, leaves the door open on the face of this for some pacific solution of outstanding problems, particularly in view of the assertion that colonial question will never be the cause for war between England and Germany. On the other hand these offers, in Herr Hitler's mind, may be merely made *more suo* with view to representing himself later as the injured and maligned party if they are not accepted.

It is these conflicting considerations which make it difficult to express any opinion as to line to be taken on the speech as a whole, since it would be impolitic either to reject offers out of hand or to accept them unconditionally.

No. 314

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 1)

No. 157 Saving: Telegraphic [C 6345/15/18]

BERLIN, April 29, 1939

My telegram No. 335.¹

Following are main points of Herr Hitler's Reichstag speech of April 28:

France. The return of the Saar Territory has done away with all territorial problems in Europe between France and Germany. It is regretted that French statesmen should take the German attitude for granted. It was not through fear that Germany has adopted this policy but as an expression of appreciation of the necessity for securing peace in Europe.

Justification of German action since Munich. The new frontiers between Slovakia, the Carpatho-Ukraine and Hungary were fixed by Germany and Italy as arbitrators in view of the fact that Czecho-Slovakia and Hungary themselves made no appeal to the four Munich Powers. England and France raised no objection to this arrangement, which actually constituted a formal departure from the Munich Agreement, and accepted the terms of the arbitration. Roumania, which is regarded by the United States of America as being menaced by Germany, expressed the view at that time that it was desirable to have a direct line of communications with Germany *via* the Ukraine and Slovakia. The contention that the Munich Agreement has been violated cannot be supported. The Agreement was not a final one, because it admitted that other problems required solution. Germany cannot be reproached for the fact that only Italy and Germany were consulted in the negotiations for the Czecho-Slovak-Hungarian frontier and that Czecho-Slovakia finally disintegrated. Germany refused to give a guarantee since the conditions required under the Munich Agreement did not exist. Bohemia and Moravia, as remnants of the former Czecho-Slovakia, have nothing whatever to do with the Munich Agreement. That Agreement only related to questions affecting the mutual relationship between Germany and England.

¹ No. 306.

If the Agreement were to be applied to every future German activity of a political nature, England too should take no step in Palestine or elsewhere without consulting Germany. If His Majesty's Government conclude that the Munich Agreement is annulled, Germany will take cognisance of the fact and proceed accordingly.

Anglo-German Relations. Herr Hitler has always favoured close friendship and collaboration between England and Germany. He recognises the importance to mankind of the existence of the British Empire, which is a valuable factor for all cultural and economic life. His admiration for British colonisation does not mean that the German people should forego their vital rights. A lasting Anglo-German friendship can only be based on recognition of mutual interests. England should understand that Germany does not suffer from any feeling of inferiority towards England. The German historical past is far too great for that. If England looks upon Germany as a vassal State, Germany has wasted her friendship on England and will find ways and means of securing her independence without loss of dignity.

Anglo-German Naval Agreement. The proposal for a voluntary restriction of German naval armaments was based on the conviction that a war between England and Germany would never again be possible. That conviction, which is alive in Herr Hitler today, is no longer shared in London where the opinion prevails that in whatever conflict Germany becomes involved Great Britain will oppose her. As this is confirmed by the encirclement policy, the basis for the Naval Treaty has been removed. For Germany this is not a matter of practical material importance—for it is hoped that an armaments race will be avoided—but an action of self-respect. Should His Majesty's Government wish to enter once more into negotiations with Germany on the subject, the latter would welcome the prospect of coming to a clear and straightforward understanding.

Colonies. Germany will continue to make her claim on Great Britain for a return of the colonies. The question would, however, never become the cause of a military conflict. These colonies, which are of no value to Great Britain, are of vital importance to Germany.

Poland. The conclusion of the Anti-Aggression Agreement in 1934 improved Polish-German relations. The Agreement did not affect the existing Franco-Polish Pact but this consideration was not intended to apply to any pacts subsequently concluded. The question of Danzig, which is a German city and wishes to belong to Germany, still awaits solution. The right of access by Poland to the sea is fully recognised by Germany, provided that the latter has access to East Prussia. Certain proposals were, therefore, made to Poland by Germany providing for the return of Danzig to the Reich and a railway across the Corridor in return for the recognition of Polish rights in Danzig and of the present Polish-German frontier with a 25 year non-aggression guarantee. In addition Slovakia would be guaranteed by Germany, Poland and Hungary. The German offer has been rejected by Poland. In view of the violation of the German-Polish 1934 Agreement by the conclusion of a mutual assistance understanding with England, the

German Government have abrogated the 1934 Agreement but are prepared to negotiate a fresh arrangement.

President Roosevelt's Offer. The reply of the German Government is set out under 21 headings, the substance of which is as follows:

Fear of war is due to agitation by the press and politicians in other countries. Germany has settled her problems by peaceful means and has no knowledge of being a threat to other nations. The loss of independence by three nations in Europe and one in Africa is not understood by Germany. If President Roosevelt can name any States threatened with aggression and name the aggressor, such accusations can be refuted. If all problems can be solved at the council table, the action of the United States of America in withdrawing from the League of Nations must give rise to scepticism. Germany has had full experience of conferences and will not only now but for all future time never enter a conference defenceless. Every German negotiator will have behind him the united strength of the German nation. The States mentioned in President Roosevelt's appeal have all replied that they are not threatened by Germany. The latter, however, is prepared to give an assurance to these States at their request against attack on a basis of reciprocity. Any threat by Germany to the American continent is unfounded.

The only constructive remarks contained in the speech are Germany's willingness:

- (a) to conclude a new Anglo-German Naval Treaty,
- (b) to negotiate a fresh German-Polish Agreement, and
- (c) to give certain States guarantees against aggression under certain conditions.

No. 315

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 1)

No. 42 Saving: Telegraphic [C 6355/54/18]

WARSAW, April 29, 1939

There has been a strong reaction here to Hitler's speech; denunciation of Polish-German Agreement of 1934 is regarded as an unfriendly gesture but not as changing the situation since for weeks past little real trust has been felt in 1934 Agreement as shown by partial mobilisation at the end of March.

2. In general the public has preserved its attitude of calm and confidence. Some sections of opinion even welcome what they regard as clarification of the situation.

3. Polish authorities clearly intend to prevent anti-German demonstrations of which however there has been no sign. All non-official demonstrations or open-air assemblies both on May 1 and on May 3, the Polish national day, have been banned.

4. At Posen the association of newspaper distributors has spontaneously decided to boycott German newspapers, and there is a tendency also to

boycott German books. Ministry of Foreign Affairs do not, however, consider movement at all seriously.

5. Press comments this morning based on an interview at Ministry of Foreign Affairs are sharp.

Repeated to Berlin.

No. 316

Viscount Halifax to Sir W. Seeds (Moscow)

No. 325 [C 6338/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April 29, 1939*

Sir,

I asked the Soviet Ambassador to call on me today on his return from Moscow. I told His Excellency that we had hoped to be in a position before now to send a reply to the carefully considered and very valuable proposals that we had recently received from the Soviet Government.¹ Our time had, however, during the past week been much taken up with other important questions, and I was sorry that it had not yet been possible to place the Soviet Government in final possession of our views. Moreover, the nature of the Soviet proposals had been such that we had felt it necessary to consult the French Government before ourselves sending a reply.

2. Meanwhile there was one matter in regard to which I could not but think that the Soviet Government were under some misapprehension as to the attitude of His Majesty's Government. It seemed to me, reading the Soviet Government proposals, that they feared lest under our suggestions it might so turn out that the Soviet Government would be committed in certain circumstances to help Poland and Roumania, without Great Britain and France themselves being involved. If this was, in fact, in the mind of the Soviet Government, it was a mistaken conclusion, inasmuch as the whole essence of our suggestion had been that, owing to the particular political difficulties of which we were all aware, the Soviet Government might offer their assistance in whatever form might seem appropriate, if and when desired, but only in circumstances in which our own guarantees would *ex hypothesi* have been called into operation. The Ambassador said that this was an important point and that he would make it plain to M. Litvinov.

3. From this we turned to a short discussion of Herr Hitler's speech. The Ambassador's judgment of this was what I naturally anticipated. He said that it seemed remarkable for Herr Hitler to suggest that it was profitable for anybody to enter into discussions with the German Government with the object of making new treaty arrangements, at a moment that he was unilaterally terminating two of the engagements under which the German Government had hitherto been bound. The Polish Treaty had five more years to run and its value had been solemnly reasserted only three months

• ¹ See No. 201.

ago when Herr von Ribbentrop visited Warsaw, and the Anglo-German Naval Agreement also contained no provision for unilateral denunciation. The moral was sufficiently plain. Whether Herr Hitler believed his own case or not, it was clear that no certainty or assurance could attach to any treaty or arrangement made with him. In these circumstances the Ambassador was concerned to stress the unfortunate impression that would be created if His Majesty's Government were to make any response to Herr Hitler's invitation to discuss matters arising out of the denunciation of the Anglo-German Naval Agreement. Any such action on our part would emphasise the doubts that had been aroused by the return of Sir Nevile Henderson to Berlin. There was only one policy to pursue, and that was to strengthen the anti-aggression front and make it as wide and all-embracing as possible.

4. I told the Ambassador that we should certainly take no decision on the matters he had raised without very careful consideration, and that, for the present, we were contenting ourselves with acknowledging the Note about the Naval Agreement,² and should make any further observations after due time for reflection.

5. The Ambassador then asked me if I could give him any indication of what had been the nature of our conversations with the Roumanian Foreign Minister. I told the Ambassador in general terms that the Roumanian Foreign Minister had expressed his satisfaction with his conversations at Angora, and that he had showed himself very anxious to direct Roumanian policy towards the strengthening of the Balkan Entente and the improvement of relations with Bulgaria. On leaving here, he intended to visit Paris, Rome and also Belgrade, where he would hope to be able to influence favourably the policy of the Yugoslav Government. As regards Bulgaria, M. Gafencu's inclination was to encourage her to draw closer to the Balkan Entente along economic lines, and that, at present at all events, the Roumanian Government were not disposed to think it wise to raise the question of any territorial readjustments. M. Gafencu had reported on his interview in Berlin, where he said no pressure had been exercised on Roumania and where he had found Herr Hitler's principal preoccupation to be with Danzig and his mood one of irritation with Great Britain. For the rest, M. Gafencu had impressed upon us the great importance under which Roumania lay of pursuing a policy between her two large neighbours which would not cause offence to either. I was bound to recognise the strength of his feeling in this matter and of his anxiety lest by any steps taken now he might, in fact, precipitate the dangers that all our policy was concerned to avoid. M. Maisky appeared to appreciate this point but contented himself with saying, both in regard to Roumania and Poland, that he thought the difficulties that I had constantly expressed to him in this regard might tend to diminish. He again repeated what he had said to me on more than one occasion in regard to the general attitude of the Soviet Government, namely, that they felt that various patchwork attempts at strengthening international security were less valuable than

² See No. 307. A formal acknowledgement was sent to the German Chargé d'Affaires on May 2.

would be a more comprehensive effort that included all possible points of danger.

6. Finally, M. Maisky asked me if I could tell him anything as to the progress of our negotiations with the Turks. To this I replied that they were, I thought, proceeding very satisfactorily. In regard to the Mediterranean, I anticipated that we should have little difficulty about arriving at agreement. In so far as the other area principally affecting Turkey was concerned, namely, the Balkans, I thought that the Turkish Government were anxious to keep the negotiations that they were having with the Soviet Government on somewhat parallel lines with our own. The general conclusion I formed of the attitude of the Turkish Government was that they were exceedingly well disposed to some such arrangement as we had under contemplation, but that they wished any agreement reached to be concerned with the geographical area of the Balkans and the Mediterranean, in which they were primarily interested. The Ambassador observed that a wider and more general commitment would be more valuable, on which I made the comment that this might well be so on paper but that, in fact, the point did not seem to me of capital importance. If trouble started in one part of Europe, it was probable that, as things stood at the present time, it would speedily become very much more general, and that the essential thing was to satisfy ourselves that, when this happened, we could count upon support from the Turkish Government in the areas with which they were directly connected.

7. M. Maisky asked whether we expected to be able to send our reply to the Soviet Government in the course of next week, and I told him that, while it was impossible for me to be sure about any precise date, I should certainly wish to do so at the earliest possible moment. The Ambassador said that he was at my disposition if there were any points arising out of the Soviet Government telegram about which we felt further elucidation to be necessary, and I assured him that I, on my side, also held myself available for consultation at any time that he might desire.

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

No. 317

Sir N. Charles (Rome) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 2)

No. 378 [R 3490/399/22]

ROME, April 29, 1939

My Lord,

I do not think that the situation here is likely to change materially either as the result of the introduction of national service in the United Kingdom or of Herr Hitler's speech in the Reichstag.

2. As I assess the situation, Italy remains firmly in the Axis, but is uneasy at the conquering stride of her partner because she fears lest this may lead to a European conflict and cannot be sure what her own prospects might be if Germany became overwhelmingly strong. To meet these dangers it seems

likely that Italy is playing a double game, a pastime which comes natural to her. As Germany becomes stronger Italy's need to reinsure herself against Germany becomes more insistent. Thus, while Italian policy in Albania, Yugoslavia, Hungary and in the Balkans is pursued in open accord with Berlin, it is probable that Italy is trying to set up a ring of smaller States favourable to herself which in the future may be of assistance should the occasion arise for her to make a stand against Germany or even to defend herself against her.

3. My Soviet colleague informs me that Count Ciano told him categorically two or three days ago that it would be making a very great mistake to think for one minute that Italy's policy in Yugoslavia was not in complete harmony with Germany's. In his opinion the plan of the Axis Powers is to go eastwards: Germany to the Ukraine and Italy to the Ægean via Yugoslavia and Bulgaria. Greece would fall to Italy later, while Hungary and Roumania would serve as a common meeting ground, granary and oil-field. I was not surprised to learn from my Turkish colleague that he held more or less similar views.

4. At the same time I do not think that Italy has any desire to wage war, for which she does not seem to be militarily or economically prepared. She would infinitely prefer to rely on diplomatic skill to gain her advantages in the Mediterranean and in Africa. She feels, too, I think, that Germany would not care to enter into any serious adventure unless she was certain that Italy was with her as an ally. I imagine that Germany has little confidence in her Latin partner, and this may account in part for the unceasing visits of German Cabinet ministers, generals and party leaders to Italy, about which members of the German Embassy are so often complaining. Signor Mussolini would thus appear to have a strong tactical position; he can put the curb on Herr Hitler and still use the Axis for pushing Italy's ambitions. If he can, with British assistance, make up his quarrel with France and thereby obtain concessions, even though they be of moderate proportions, he will have strengthened his position with everyone and especially as against Germany. In that case, if war should be brought on, Signor Mussolini might state his desire of remaining neutral and thus snatch a month or two which he might put to good use for bargaining with both sides. After the war had lasted a few months he would be in a better position to weigh the chances of coming in on Germany's side, or remaining permanently neutral at some price to be paid by Great Britain and France or ultimately even of siding against Germany. Unless or until, however, war breaks out Italy must remain outwardly in the Axis and must live under the shadow of her powerful neighbour, for if she tries to break loose when Germany has not her hands full she would be open to a quick and overpowering attack on Trieste and the Trentino as a reprisal, and she cannot rely on British and French support being available in such an event.

5. The rape of Austria and later of Bohemia and Slovakia are lessons which Italians can understand, and Italy's seizure of Albania may as easily have been a warning to Germany that Italy regarded Yugoslavia and the

Adriatic as a special preserve as it may have been a step taken in the Axis plan. In the eyes of the Italian Government it may have had the advantage of serving both these objects, as well as that of proving to the world and to Italian public opinion that Italy as well as Germany could reap material benefit from Axis methods. There is undoubtedly rising popular feeling in Italy against Germany, and the thought of making war on the side of Germany is repellant to the ordinary Italian civilian or soldier.

6. It seems, in view of what I have said in the preceding paragraph, absurd to mention another alternative card which may be reposing up the sleeve of the Axis. I refer to the possibility of a sudden attack delivered simultaneously by the Axis Powers, perhaps in conjunction with Japan, against one or more objectives. Yet this is certainly a possibility and may fit in with a mood of desperation, and it should not be excluded and is surely not being excluded from the calculations which His Majesty's Government are making in regard to the international situation.

7. So far as concerns the U.S.S.R. and Spain, I understand that Count Ciano believes that the latter country has been won over by the Axis Powers, and that at least Spain would not oppose them with force of arms in the event of a European war. The Soviet Government's activities in regard to the guarantees which may be given to neighbouring countries are being carefully watched. The granting of such guarantees would, of course, be decried as further proof of Great Britain's efforts to encircle Germany. It would arouse indignation against us in the minds of many Italians who would otherwise wish us well, but it would certainly increase the general feeling of uneasiness about the results of a possible conflict.

8. I am sending copies of this despatch to His Majesty's Ambassadors in Paris and Berlin.

I have, &c.,
NOEL CHARLES

No. 318

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 30, 4.0 p.m.)
No. 192 Telegraphic [C 6213/3356/18]

PARIS, April 30, 1939, 2.16 p.m.

Your telegram No. 186.¹

I communicated yesterday to French Government an *aide-mémoire* in the sense of above. They will give their definite reply on May 2. Meanwhile, as the Minister for Foreign Affairs will be away from Paris till then, I saw him this morning and asked for his views on your latest proposals.

2. M. Bonnet feels that our two Governments are at one regarding essentials and that it is only regarding the best method of attaining them that they differ. He is, however, in principle quite ready to accept the latest proposal

¹ No. 305.

of His Majesty's Government *provided the latter can persuade the Soviet Government to agree to it*, and this he continues to doubt.

No. 319

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax (Received April 30, 6.0 p.m.)
No. 132 Telegraphic [C 6222/3356/18]

WARSAW, April 30, 1939, 2.17 p.m.

Your telegram No. 128.¹

I gave the Minister for Foreign Affairs the gist of the relevant passages of this telegram. M. Beck expressed his appreciation of the fact that His Majesty's Government had taken into consideration the arguments which he had put forward during the conversations in London and stated that he had no criticism to make of the proposal which is being made to the French Government.

Repeated to Bucharest, Moscow, Paris, Angora, Berlin, Helsingfors and Riga.

¹ No. 304.

No. 320

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax
(Received April 30, 7.20 p.m.)
No. 131 Telegraphic [C 6234/54/18]

WARSAW, April 30, 1939, 2.18 p.m.

The President and the principal members of the Polish Government met yesterday to consider the situation after Herr Hitler's speech.

2. Afterwards I saw the Minister for Foreign Affairs who asked me in the first place to assure you that Herr Hitler's denunciation of the Polish-German Pact and his remarks about Poland had not caused the Polish Government in any way to modify their attitude to the Anglo-Polish Guarantee as stated in his conversations in London.

3. He drew my attention to certain misleading statements in the speech; for instance no one of authority in Germany had ever formally suggested to the Polish Government that Germany was prepared to guarantee the Polish frontier [for] twenty-five years. Only vague allusions in the course of conversations had been made to the possibility of such a guarantee. The idea of a joint guarantee of Slovakia had also never been put forward in a concrete form.

4. Herr Hitler had also in his speech minimised the importance of counter-proposals made by the Polish Government as regards Danzig. He had suggested that Poland was only prepared to agree to the substitution of a Polish-German guarantee for the guarantee of the League of Nations whereas the Polish Government had been ready to agree to serious modifications in the

Statute. They had further been willing to waive all customs and visa formalities in the Corridor.

5. In view of these misrepresentations M. Beck intended to reply to the German memorandum¹ and as the German Government had published their memorandum also to give it publicity. He would follow the line of the German memorandum in examining the historical aspect of the Danzig question and would express his readiness to accept the German offer of negotiation on this subject, but only as equals. He further intended to make a speech in Parliament towards the end of the week on the general situation.

6. M. Beck also informed me that he considered minority declaration of November 5, 1937 (see my telegram No. 51 (59) Saving of November 6, 1937²) was no longer valid in view of the denunciation of the Pact of 1934 and that he would refuse to negotiate any further with the German Ambassador on this subject. On the other hand Polish Government had no intention of permitting any provocative demonstrations or articles in the press and would not take any further military measures.

As far as M. Beck knew, nothing serious on the German side either of a military or any other nature had developed.

He further told me that the Polish Ambassador in Berlin had sent in his resignation in view of the fact that he had been appointed in 1934 when the Pact was concluded. No decision had yet been taken as to whether this resignation would be accepted.

Repeated to Berlin.

¹ See No. 309, note 1.

² Not printed. This telegram gave the text of the German-Polish minority declaration.

No. 321

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax

(Received April 30, 6.0 p.m.)

No. 133 Telegraphic [C 6223/27/55]

WARSAW, April 30, 1939, 2.29 p.m.

My telegram No. 127.¹

Minister for Foreign Affairs suggested to me yesterday that Staff conversations should be initiated without delay and that in view of the difficulty of sending any responsible officer to London under the present conditions, English military experts should unostentatiously come here to discuss the military requirements of the situation with the higher officers of the General Staff.

2. I told M. Beck that I had not yet received any reply from you regarding a British loan for military purposes. M. Beck suggested that should His Majesty's Government accept this idea in principle it might be advisable that Polish experts should go to London to discuss details.

¹ No. 273.

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax

(Received May 1, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 178 Telegraphic [R 3433/661/67]

ANGORA, April 30, 1939, 11.25 p.m.

My telegrams Nos. 164¹ and 167.²

My French colleague is telegraphing to Paris account of a conversation he had with M. Potemkin on April 30.

2. Following is summary of the points in his telegram.

(a) Potemkin's object is to harmonize Soviet and Turkish policy.

(b) He has been fully informed of the negotiations between His Majesty's Government, France and Turkey and while agreeing that the Turkish Government have been entirely loyal, feels some surprise at the advanced state of these negotiations.

(c) He observes with some preoccupation that the Turkish Government have drawn a distinction between their attitude to Italians and the German menace.

(d) He desires to synchronize Anglo-French-Turkish and Russo-Turkish negotiations.

(e) Bulgarian Prime Minister made point of seeing Potemkin on his way through Sofia and told him, subject to the return of Southern Dobrudja, Bulgaria was ready to join the Balkan Entente and even to see its provisions strengthened in regard to attack from outside. Potemkin had, however, found the Turkish Government sceptical as to Bulgarian attitude although M. Kiossievannoff had given formal assurances that Bulgarian claims referred only to Dobrudja.

(f) Potemkin liked M. Bonnet's proposals but was uncertain how far they had your support.

(g) He has informed Turkish Government of the proposals under discussion between Soviet Government, French Government and His Majesty's Government and has informed his own Government of our negotiations with the Turkish Government and will await instructions.

3. I have not asked to see M. Potemkin as there is no special purpose in my doing so, unless you send me instructions. I may meet him during the next few days and in any case I will ask Minister for Foreign Affairs what has passed.

Repeated to Paris, Rome, Moscow, Warsaw, Athens, Belgrade, Bucharest and Sofia.

¹ No. 287.

² No. 291.

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 1)

No. 249 Saving: Telegraphic [C 6233/15/18]

PARIS, April 30, 1939

I asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs this morning what his impressions were of Herr Hitler's speech.

His Excellency replied that he thought on the whole that we were all inclined to attach too much importance to the Führer's words. It was his acts that mattered.

M. Bonnet, however, feels that the speech was very skilful from the internal point of view. He has already heard from Germany that it has succeeded to a certain extent in making many there believe that Great Britain's real aim is to encircle the Reich. M. Bonnet thinks it important that we should do all we can to counter this propaganda amongst the Germans themselves.

I assured M. Bonnet that we were already doing this and that His Majesty's Government were well aware how important it was.

I asked what His Excellency thought of Herr Hitler's rather uncanny silence about Russia. He thinks this may be because the Führer is well aware of the unwillingness of Poland and Roumania to agree to accept Soviet help and of our difficulties in that connexion, and because Herr Hitler therefore thinks it politic to let the Russian bear lie for the present.

M. Bonnet agrees that the danger spot now seems to be Danzig; he thinks the city will vote itself into the Reich in the first instance and will then call for help from the Führer for its oppressed German inhabitants.

CHAPTER V

The European situation: Polish-German relations: further British proposals and Soviet counter- proposals: correspondence with the Vatican. (May 1-6, 1939.)

No. 324

Sir R. Hoare (Bucharest) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 2, 9.30 a.m.)
No. 158 Telegraphic [C 6395/3356/18]

BUCHAREST, May 1, 1939, 8.50 p.m.

Your telegram No. 165¹ and Warsaw telegram No. 132.²

I informed the President of the Council who is in charge of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He is in the fullest agreement as regards the four points in paragraph 2 but is uneasy lest a public declaration by the Soviet Government, following President Roosevelt's, arouse Germany to fury and precipitate a crisis. He will discuss the matter with the Minister for Foreign Affairs on his return but his present feeling is that declaration by the Soviet Government might produce counter-blast on lines similar to enquiry regarding Roosevelt's message but in more threatening form. In this connexion he laid great stress on the importance he attaches to Germans being fully engaged in the west at least as soon as they embark on hostilities in the east.

¹ No. 304.

² No. 319.

No. 325

Sir A. Ryan (Durazzo) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 2, 9.30 a.m.)
No. 74 Telegraphic [R 3504/1335/90]

DURAZZO, May 1, 1939, 9.10 p.m.

My telegram No. 71.¹

Everything now points to existence of serious threat to Greece which may be followed by sudden attack. My Greek colleague thinks that Greek forces though not numerous in Northern Greece could hold up ground attack in the mountain passes but that air attack might be irresistible as Greek air force amounts to little and he is uncertain of value of anti-aircraft defence.

¹ Not printed. This telegram of April 30 reported the movement of Italian troops towards the Greek frontier.

2. My French colleague is greatly perturbed. He suggested yesterday that he and I should associate ourselves with Greek Minister and perhaps Turkish Minister in representing gravity of situation to our respective Governments and recommending action in the nature of an ultimatum to restrain Italy. While agreeing that situation was menacing I demurred to last suggestion as being outside my province and when I saw French Minister again this morning he had decided to confine himself to recommending 'energetic action'. He has reported accordingly to Paris. Turkish Minister whom we both saw this morning agrees generally with my French colleague's view of the situation and the need for such action as may be possible to restrain the Italians.

3. Greek Minister left for Athens by air this morning to confer with his Government.

4. While drafting this I have seen the Yugoslav Military Attaché who takes less serious view. He recognises that Italian forces are greater than needed for Albania but doubts whether they are sufficient for successful operations against Greece. He suggests that Italy may be preparing not for immediate action but with a view to strengthening her position in the event of general war.

5. We all have difficulty in getting exact military information. Albanian Minister of the Interior told Turkish Minister this morning that he estimated Italian forces now in Albania at 5 divisions, 15,000 men each; Yugoslav Military Attaché does not place present number higher than 60,000. There has been less activity yesterday and today on road to Kavaja but further forces have been landed here today.

6. Italian representative returned from Rome today. Developments in Albanian constitutional situation may follow.

Repeated to Rome and Athens.

No. 326

*Minute by Mr. Strang*¹

[C 6406/54/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 1, 1939

The Polish Ambassador told me today that it was in view of the statement made to M. Beck by Sir H. Kennard of the attitude of His Majesty's Government on the Danzig question (our telegram to Warsaw No. 115² of April 20) that M. Beck decided to give Sir H. Kennard a full account of what had passed between the Polish and German Governments on this subject.

I let His Excellency see the record³ which Sir H. Kennard had sent us of this conversation. Count Raczynski said that the account he had received

¹ This minute was written by Mr. Strang in relation to Warsaw telegram No. 126 (No. 274).

² No. 237.

³ See No. 274.

from M. Beck corresponded closely with what Sir H. Kennard had sent us. M. Beck's purpose in giving us this information was to show us that what was at issue between Poland and Germany was not simply details of the Danzig question, but an effort by Germany to impose a solution on Poland under pressure.

The Ambassador told me that when M. Beck saw Herr Hitler at Berchtesgaden,⁴ the latter had only touched very lightly on the question, suggesting that certain modifications in the situation might be desirable. Herr von Ribbentrop had, after M. Beck's interview with Herr Hitler, raised the question in an unpleasant and rather challenging way. M. Beck's response had accordingly been rather stiff. In the course of his remarks, Herr von Ribbentrop had said something vague about Slovakia, but nothing about a tripartite guarantee of the independence of the Slovak State, as alleged by Herr Hitler in his speech on April 28.

Count Raczynski added very confidentially that Herr Hitler had also recalled that Marshal Pilsudski had once gone as far as Kiev, and had vaguely indicated that he considered that Poland had some kind of priority in the Ukraine. This is no doubt what is meant by the passage in Sir H. Kennard's telegram No. 126, which says that Herr von Ribbentrop's agents 'had given the Polish Embassy in Berlin to understand that Herr von Ribbentrop wished Poland to join Germany in a crusade against Russia, in order to further his grandiose and insatiable ambitions. Poland was to be entirely separated in this way from the Western Powers'.

Count Raczynski added that there was, of course, no reference to this in Herr Hitler's speech.

Count Raczynski went on to say that the immediate object of Herr Hitler's policy was to break the connection between Eastern and Western European countries. He would try by cajolery or threats to secure the abrogation of the Anglo-Polish arrangement. The Polish Government had, of course, no intention of letting themselves in for any such manœuvre.

Count Raczynski said he was sure that, notwithstanding what had happened, M. Beck would still do his best to create a *détente* between Poland and Germany, though he doubted whether this would be possible. I said that, as the Polish Government were aware, we of course would wish him to secure this result if possible. Count Raczynski said that he knew this, and that our attitude had been clearly explained to him by Sir A. Cadogan and to M. Beck by Sir H. Kennard (Tel. No. 115 to Warsaw).

Count Raczynski here mentioned Mr. Percy Philip's⁵ broadcast for the B.B.C. from Paris on April 29 about the attitude of the French Government, which seemed to suggest that a settlement of the Danzig question in Germany's favour should have been reached long ago, and that this was an issue on which Frenchmen could not be expected to fight.

He said that this kind of broadcast did not improve the situation at a delicate moment like the present. I told him that we had heard about this

⁴ On January 5. See Volume III of this Series, Chapter IX.

⁵ Paris correspondent of the 'New York Times'.

broadcast and that we had made enquiries. (Mr. Peake has reported on this to Sir A. Cadogan).⁶

W. STRANG

⁶ Mr. Peake (of the News Department of the Foreign Office) was informed that the B.B.C. were under the impression that Mr. Philip was expressing in his broadcast the views of M. Bonnet. Mr. Philip subsequently explained (i) that M. Bonnet was not responsible for the broadcast; (ii) that his (Mr. Philip's) words had been grossly misinterpreted and misrepresented.

No. 327

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)

No. 1069 [R 3496/661/67]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 1, 1939*

Sir,

The French Ambassador asked to see me today and began by reference to the progress of our parallel negotiations with Turkey. The French Government felt that these were proceeding satisfactorily and thought that it was not inappropriate to consider the point whether any agreement that might be reached between Turkey, France and Great Britain respectively should be cast in bilateral or tripartite form. The French Government were inclined to prefer the tripartite form, and, in regard to this, M. Corbin said that he would leave for the Office a Note in which the argument was somewhat further developed.¹

2. I said we had not as yet given serious consideration to the matter. It might be, as he said, on the whole desirable to choose the tripartite method, but if, in the alternative, any objection was seen to this, there was not perhaps any essential difference, provided our agreements were drawn on the same lines, between one tripartite instrument or twin bilateral instruments. I told the Ambassador that we would bear the point in mind.

3. I went on to say that, so far as our negotiations were concerned, I got the impression that the Turkish Government were quite prepared immediately to be clear about the Mediterranean side of the problem, but that, so far as concerned the Balkan side, they were concerned to keep their negotiations with us running on lines analogous to those which are being followed by their negotiations with Russia. M. Corbin gave me to understand that the French Government had had the same information.

4. The Ambassador then enquired whether, in my interview with M. Maisky on Saturday,² the latter had put forward any new proposals. I told the Ambassador that M. Maisky had not done this but had been concerned to elicit from me when our answer to the proposals of his Government might be expected. I gave M. Corbin a general indication of the line that I had taken with M. Maisky and I told him that we had also communicated with Warsaw and Bucharest in the same sense. I had thought it wise to make sure that Poland and Roumania would not raise objection even to the rather

¹ See No. 339.

² April 29. See No. 316.

careful proposals that we had made in this matter, and I had been relieved to receive information from Warsaw this morning to the effect that M. Beck saw no objection to our plan.³ I had also heard in the same sense from M. Bonnet, who, however, attached a condition that he did not expect to be fulfilled, that the Soviet Government would also accept it.⁴ This drew from M. Corbin the observation that the Soviet Government were always very suspicious with everybody and were always looking for a concealed trap.

I am, &c.,

HALIFAX

³ See No. 319.

⁴ See No. 318.

No. 328

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)

No. 1071 [R 3498/7/22]

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 1, 1939

Sir,

During the course of a conversation with the French Ambassador today, I asked M. Corbin whether he had anything to tell me in regard to the question that I had discussed with him at our last meeting,¹ namely, whether or not the French Government would feel it possible to take up the question of Franco-Italian conversations. In this connexion I told him of what Lord Perth had just been telling me of a conversation that the latter had had shortly before he left Rome with Count Ciano. In the course of this conversation Count Ciano had emphasised how earnestly the Italian Government desired peace and how disastrous any other development would be. On the strength of this I told M. Corbin that I thought we all ought to do anything in our power to enlist the aid of Signor Mussolini in the direction of restraining what might be unwise or provocative action by Herr Hitler. I was especially anxious in regard to Danzig, but Signor Mussolini had given us to understand that, anxious as he was for peace, he could not or would not pull his weight at Berlin in this direction unless he had been able to start negotiations with France. It was, of course, possible that all this might be in the nature of deception, and I recognised the necessity of proceeding with extreme prudence. On the other hand, Lord Perth and, I understood, M. François-Poncet were both of the opinion that it would be a mistake to let this opportunity go by, and I did accordingly earnestly hope that M. Daladier would give very careful consideration to the possibility of making some move. The opportunity seemed to have been afforded by Count Ciano's recent conversation with M. François-Poncet. To all this M. Corbin replied that it was very difficult, and that the particular point of difficulty was the claim of Count Ciano that, in regard to Tunis, the basis of the conversations should be that of the 1896 Agreement. This was a matter of extreme complexity and danger. I told M. Corbin that I was naturally not competent to discuss the details concerning Tunis with him, but that I was very much impressed with

¹ See No. 296.

the desirability of seizing any chance that might offer to enlist Signor Mussolini's assistance in the direction of moderation and a restraining influence on Herr Hitler.

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

No. 329

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax
(Received May 2, 4.45 p.m.)
No. 179 Telegraphic [R 3537/790/7]

ANGORA, May 2, 1939, 1.56 p.m.

My telegram No. 173.¹

Minister for Foreign Affairs is evidently nonplussed as to how to proceed with his policy for bringing Bulgaria into the Balkan Entente. Although he remains hopeful he tells me his task has become much more difficult now that he is precluded from mentioning Dobrudja.

2. He told me on May 1 M. Gafencu has been much stiffened as a result of his visits to London and Paris. In London he seems, according to Minister for Foreign Affairs, to have received the impression that we sympathise with his reluctance to discussion of territorial concessions, while in Paris, again according to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, M. Gafencu appears to have been actively encouraged not to make such concessions.

3. M. Gafencu will be here about May 15 when I presume further discussions will take place as foreshadowed in paragraph 7 of your telegram No. 158 to Bucharest.²

4. My Roumanian colleague is personally strongly opposed to territorial concessions and, I think, uses his influence accordingly.

Repeated to Belgrade, Bucharest, Athens and Sofia.

¹ Not printed. In this telegram of April 28 Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen reported that he had given the Minister for Foreign Affairs the substance of Foreign Office telegram No. 158 to Bucharest (see Note 2).

² Not printed. This telegram summarized the parts of the conversations with M. Gafencu regarding Bulgaria. See No. 285.

No. 330

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 3, 9.30 a.m.)
No. 342 Telegraphic [C 6458/16/18]

BERLIN, May 2, 1939, 6.40 p.m.

I called on the Minister for Foreign Affairs this morning.

2. He spoke at great length on failure of His Majesty's Government to understand Germany's point of view on British policy of encirclement and hostility to Germany, on England's refusal to recognise Germany as a great Power and so on and so forth. In replying I sought above all to emphasise

change both official and public of feeling in England towards Germany since March *coup* at Prague and Herr Hitler's breach of faith with Prime Minister.

3. There was nothing new in anything which the Minister said in these respects though it included some demonstrable misrepresentations such as that British Government had encouraged M. Benes to adopt hostile attitude against Germany last year. I am however under no illusion that my refutations of this and other erroneous statements in any way altered the Minister for Foreign Affairs' views. He is impervious to argument or reason, and the fact must be realised.

4. As he talked of Germany being ready for a war of six months or 20 years I derived the impression that he was not so confident as heretofore that England would never fight. In fact his unmistakable line was that England was actually seeking a war with Germany because she could not bring herself to recognise Germany as a Great Power.

5. His Excellency referred to Herr Hitler's constant desire in the past for good relations with Britain but added that though he still desired them his belief in their possibility was greatly shaken and he quoted abrogation of Naval Treaty in this connexion. Apart from allusion to the growing hatred of England throughout Germany as a result of recent events (I assured him that this feeling was reciprocated in England as a result of destruction of Czech independence) his language was not immoderate as regards relations with Great Britain and only became violent in regard to Poland. (I am reporting separately on that subject).¹ He did however give me indication that British press attacks on Germany would be countered by increasing anti-British campaign in the German press.

6. The Minister laid much stress on what he described as incapacity of British statesmen to understand Herr Hitler, his real love for peace and the greatness of his genius. The interview terminated by his observing that come what might Germany's conscience would be absolutely clear. I replied that come what might I hoped that he and I might still, up to moment that the worst happened if it had got to happen, work together to prevent it happening.

¹ See No. 333.

No. 331

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 2, 8.15 p.m.)
No. 341 Telegraphic [C 6444/54/18]

BERLIN, May 2, 1939, 6.50 p.m.

Warsaw telegram No. 131.¹

Statements of Polish Minister for Foreign Affairs in paragraph 3 is [*sic*] surely disingenuous. Please see in this connexion Berlin telegram No. 317² from which, according to information supplied to Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes by

¹ No. 320.

² No. 254.

Polish Ambassador himself, the latter officially replied on March 26 to German offer which had included long-term guarantee of Polish frontier.

2. May I know for my own information whether Colonel Beck made any mention of exact terms of German proposals during his recent visit to London?

Repeated to Warsaw.

No. 332

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax
(Received May 3, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 180 Telegraphic [R 3566/661/67]

ANGORA, May 2, 1939, 7.42 p.m.

Your telegram No. 144.¹

I had preliminary discussion with the Minister for Foreign Affairs on May 1. As authorized in paragraph 5 of your telegram under reference I explained to him the present state of Anglo-Soviet negotiations. He asked me in this connexion whether it was intended that Russia should receive a guarantee of British and French support if attacked by Germany, for instance through Lithuania. In other words would guarantee be reciprocal or not? I said that I understood your proposal to be for a unilateral declaration by Soviet Government. I should be grateful for instructions as to what reply to give.

2. He assured me that the words 'last named Power' referred to Italy. See paragraph 2 of your telegram.

Repeated to Paris, Moscow and Warsaw.

¹ No. 310.

No. 333

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 3, 9.30 a.m.)
No. 343 Telegraphic [C 6456/54/18]

BERLIN, May 2, 1939, 8.19 p.m.

In the course of my conversation this morning with Minister for Foreign Affairs he spoke very bitterly on the subject of Poland and I was struck by the similarity of his language to that employed by him last year in regard to Czecho-Slovakia. He himself drew open comparison between the Polish and Czech cases. He mentioned for instance that like the Czechs, who last year had published maps showing a Bohemia extending almost to Berlin (a fact which I observed that I heard for the first time and did not believe), so now the Poles were claiming a Polish [*sic*] right up to the Oder. Colonel Beck, he said, was being encouraged by Western Powers to be unreasonable just as M. Benes was last year. When I made the obvious rejoinder that this was

quite untrue and that while Poland must be the judge of what were [her] true interests His Majesty's Government earnestly desired a settlement satisfactory to both sides, Herr von Ribbentrop fell back upon a diatribe against the madness of Poland in refusing a solution which Herr Hitler was alone broad-minded enough to put forward in spite of the opposition thereto of the entire German people which hated the whole Corridor and desired its total return to Germany.

I asked Herr von Ribbentrop when proposals announced by Herr Hitler in the Reichstag had first been put forward to Poland. He said that they had been adumbrated as far back as October last and definitely discussed with Colonel Beck and Polish Ambassador at Berchtesgaden in January last. The only point not raised on that occasion was naturally joint guarantee of Slovakia, see Berlin telegrams Nos. 7¹ and 16.² I then asked pointedly whether Polish refusal to accept these proposals had been made before or after March 14 last. Herr von Ribbentrop after some hesitation rang for a secretary who produced a file showing that Polish reply had been given after that date. I then asked what Colonel Beck's attitude towards these proposals had been at Berchtesgaden and he answered that it had been non-committal on the grounds that Polish Government must first be consulted. Finally I asked if German Ambassador was returning to Warsaw shortly and whether he would have any special instructions. Minister for Foreign Affairs replied that he was leaving in a few days for his post but that German Government had no instructions to give him. Herr Hitler had made his offer and would not repeat it.

Minister for Foreign Affairs finally alluded to the intensity of anti-German press campaign in Poland and failure of that Government for the past two years to restrain it. He said that it had probably been mistaken not to answer back sooner by anti-Polish campaign in the German press. He had thought of doing so but the Chancellor had always hitherto advised against it on the ground that Polish-German relations would nevertheless be satisfactorily settled. This would, he said, have easily been done if Marshal Pilsudski were still alive and he added that Colonel Beck was possibly finding himself in a difficult position.

Repeated to Warsaw.

¹ See Volume III of this Series, No. 526.

² Ibid., No. 534.

No. 334

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 3, 9.30 a.m.)
No. 345 Telegraphic [C 6457/54/18]

BERLIN, May 2, 1939, 9.20 p.m.

A diplomatic colleague informed me this evening that he had heard from a military source which he considers to be absolutely reliable and which had

given him correct advance information regarding the invasion of Czecho-Slovakia, that all preparations were being made for an invasion of Poland through Lithuania or Latvia within the next 14 days, and that certain military leave had been stopped. If however it were decided not to carry out this plan, any invasion of Poland would be postponed for 4 months.

In the event of a successful military *coup* the Germans would demand not only Danzig and the whole of the Corridor but also the province of Posen.

While the reference to Latvia and Lithuania sounds improbable, the possibility of an early *coup* cannot be excluded and the decision perhaps depends on the terms of Colonel Beck's reply to Herr Hitler which I understand is to be made on May 7.

Repeated to Warsaw.

No. 335

*Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 3, 9.30 a.m.)
No. 138 Telegraphic [C 6453/54/18]*

WARSAW, May 2, 1939, 9.49 p.m.

In view of articles in unofficial Polish press suggesting that Poland might expect in any negotiations about Danzig to secure a strengthening of her position there, I asked Counsellor to convey to M. Beck's Chef de Cabinet my apprehension lest such articles might upset British public opinion. If they represented Poland's policy, they would also give some justification for German allegations that Poland's attitude was stiffening as a result of British guarantee.

2. Count Lubienski admitted that recently press had been given more latitude. Whereas Polish Government had for a long time suppressed publication of German demands regarding Danzig, it had, since Herr Hitler's speech, been necessary to explain through the press various points in which Herr Hitler's account was inaccurate. He admitted that some organs of the press had not used this latitude very wisely and said that instructions had today been issued to the press to avoid provocation. He added that to the best of his belief M. Beck's speech on Friday would contain no surprises and no sensations.

3. M. Beck has asked me to see him tomorrow evening.

No. 336

*Minute by Mr. Makins
[C 6792/92/55]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 2, 1939

Danzig

I visited Geneva on May 1 to discuss methods of handling the Danzig question at the next session of the Council. I talked to M. Burckhardt,

M. Avenol,¹ and Mr. Walters² separately, and there was a general conversation at lunch with M. Avenol.

2. I took the general line that it would be undesirable for the Council to take measures which would create a new situation and give a pretext for action either to Germany or Poland. It would therefore be preferable to keep the Danzig question off the agenda and handle it in the Committee of Three. On this there was general agreement. It was also agreed that it was not now possible to hold a meeting of the Committee of Three in London.

3. I told M. Burckhardt that we did not wish to precipitate matters in any way or to provoke his resignation so long as there was any prospect of his services being utilised effectively. I suggested that a visit by him to Warsaw might possibly be useful in ascertaining whether the Polish Government had any intention of making positive use of his services. On his return he might visit Berlin. He agreed that a visit to Warsaw might be useful and he would be prepared to undertake it, but it was essential that the Poles should invite him to come. Similarly he would only go to Berlin with the consent of the Poles. A definite invitation was necessary partly on account of the reference to him in Hitler's speech,³ and partly because M. Komarnicki had been publicly criticising his action in remaining away from Danzig. In regard to this, I said that no such criticism had been made either in London or Warsaw.

4. If the Poles did not invite him, or if they did not clearly indicate in what manner he could be of service, he would write a letter to the Committee of Three saying that conditions in which he could carry out his functions no longer appeared to exist. The Committee could then decide on its course of action.

5. M. Burckhardt said that the path of resignation was not altogether satisfactory to him, and he would prefer that the initiative should not be left entirely to him. He said he had hoped at one time that he might remain until his appointment expired in February next, but he doubted whether the position could be held until then. I said I was sure that the *Rapporteur* and the Committee would take the responsibility of the decision. M. Burckhardt naturally feels the uncertainty of his present position, he seems at once reluctant to give up, if he can still be of service, and anxious to be able to make plans for the future. A solution which involves the continuance of his present status does not seem either fair or reasonable. Incidentally M. Burckhardt is convinced that his action in leaving Danzig in March was wise. Had he stayed he would by this time have entirely exhausted his influence without result.

6. In the general discussion considerable doubt was felt about the wisdom of M. Burckhardt going to Warsaw. His visit, which would certainly become known, would be open to misconstruction, and might excite suspicion.

¹ Secretary-General of the League of Nations.

² Deputy Secretary-General of the League of Nations.

³ In his speech on April 28, Herr Hitler had referred to M. Burckhardt as 'a man of extraordinary tact'.

M. Burckhardt could not very well negotiate with Colonel Beck about his own position, and the Poles might try to lay down the conditions in which he should endeavour to return to Danzig. It would be preferable for the *Rapporteur* to elicit the views of the Polish Government; though the possibility of a subsequent visit by the High Commissioner to Warsaw could be kept in reserve.

7. M. Avenol, Mr. Walters and M. Burckhardt were highly critical of Polish policy. They thought M. Beck had been disingenuous in seeking to minimise the importance of the Danzig question. The Poles had sought the maintenance in full vigour of the League connexion with Danzig, while at the same time systematically undermining the League's position. Its sole value in their eyes was a bargaining counter in negotiation with the Germans, and this counter was now worth little. If a Polish-German agreement were ever reached on this basis, it would, however, be the easiest way out for the Council. M. Avenol held the view strongly that the time had come for the League to terminate in practice its responsibility in Danzig. I pointed out that the Council must be careful not to lay itself open to the charge of unilateral denunciation of the Treaty position, or to put pressure on the Poles which might have the effect of weakening their morale at a critical moment. I referred to the passage in Hitler's speech in which he said that the problem of Danzig must in any case come up for discussion at the latest with the gradual extinction of the League. M. Avenol and Mr. Walters both held that the Committee of Three could only recommend the continuance of the High Commissioner in office on the basis of a definite request by Poland which could be quoted, and a clear understanding of the functions which the High Commissioner would in fact perform.

8. M. Avenol thought that the denunciation of the German-Polish Agreement had radically changed the situation. This agreement had implied in his view that Poland would not interfere with the internal development of Danzig. Now it had gone, Poland might well fall back on the general treaty position and invoke the assistance of the Council.

9. M. Burckhardt agreed. He recalled that both Germans and Poles had been most reluctant to sever the League connexion with Danzig, it was a convenience to both of them. The position had been gravitating towards a Polish-German *condominium* in Danzig, but it was doubtful whether this was now possible or whether it would ever have worked. He thought it was a case in which a neutral third party was required, and that the Germans and Poles might still be driven to rely on the League as a go-between. He felt that in any negotiated settlement of the Danzig question a cushion between Germans and Poles was necessary.

10. Subject to anything the Polish Government might say publicly in the next day or two (which might have the effect of altering the outlook) it was therefore generally felt that the best course of action was for the *Rapporteur* to explain the position to the Poles on the following lines:—Colonel Beck had undertaken before the Council to make, if he could, suggestions to the *Rapporteur*, or if not to leave it to the Committee's decision.

The position had been changed by recent events, and it was by no means clear what function the High Commissioner would now perform.

The Danzig Constitution was in practice abrogated; the Danzig question had now become one between Poland and Germany rather than Poland and Danzig, and the High Commissioner's task of dealing with problems arising between Poland and Danzig no longer seemed a real one. At the same time [the] *Rapporteur* did not desire to render the situation more difficult by proposing any action by the Council which would have effect of modifying Treaty position, or by provoking public discussion of Danzig question at Geneva. The *Rapporteur* therefore proposed to advise Committee to accept High Commissioner's resignation which in the circumstances would probably be forthcoming, but to take no further action or make any recommendation to the Council. Committee would continue to follow Danzig situation and question of appointment of another High Commissioner would remain entirely open. The Polish Government might be asked to express their views on this procedure. If they objected to it, they should be invited to give a clear declaration of their attitude; to give a specific and, if possible, a written request that the High Commissioner should remain; and to indicate what functions the High Commissioner could perform. It would have to be made clear to them that if the High Commissioner were to carry on, it would be on a somewhat different basis.

11. If the Poles fulfilled these conditions, the position of the Committee of Three would be more difficult, and no doubt M. Sandler⁴ might resign. He might be replaced by M. Munters.⁵ Mr. Walters thought, however, that at a pinch the matter could be arranged without a debate in the Council. Some report would have to be made to the Council, and it would then be open to any member to ask for a discussion.

12. On my return through Paris I saw M. Arnal of the Quai d'Orsay and gave him an account of my conversations in Geneva and of the course of action now proposed. He fully agreed as to the desirability of avoiding public discussion at Geneva, and also that the *Rapporteur* should make enquiries in Warsaw and endeavour to obtain a clear statement from the Poles. Though the solution in view was a rather lame one, he did not at present see any alternative to the resignation of the High Commissioner, and from the moral point of view the League's position was becoming untenable. But he added that if Poland reacted strongly against the procedure proposed, it might be necessary to consider whether, on grounds of general policy, M. Burckhardt's mission could not be continued in some form. He doubted whether it would in all circumstances be advisable to terminate the High Commissioner's mandate, which would in practice, if not in theory, be the closing of a chapter. I said we shared this doubt.

R. M. MAKINS

⁴ Swedish Minister for Foreign Affairs.

⁵ Latvian Minister for Foreign Affairs.

No. 337

Minute by Mr. Makins

[C 6750/54/18]

General Situation

Discussion with M. Burckhardt and M. Avenol

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 2, 1939

1. M. Burckhardt was moderately optimistic. He did not think that Germany would start a war over Danzig or the Corridor. The Germans had always been reluctant to tackle this question, and to come to grips with the Poles. One danger was that the anti-Polish policy was virtually the only element in Nazi policy which was popular in Prussia, particularly among the Junkers. There had been no enthusiasm for action in Austria or Czecho-Slovakia. On the other hand action against Poland would be unpopular in the South and West.

2. Both M. Burckhardt and M. Avenol took the view that Hitler's speech showed him for the first time on the defensive, and that it was important to keep him on the defensive. M. Burckhardt, though very critical of Polish policy and leadership and of Poland generally, and somewhat apprehensive of the use which they might make of our guarantee, said twice that the collapse or the neutralisation of Poland would be disastrous for Europe.

R. M. MAKINS

No. 338

Viscount Halifax to Sir R. Hoare (Bucharest)

No. 224 [R 3570/661/67]

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 2, 1939

Sir,

The Roumanian Minister called this afternoon in order to give me some account of the results of M. Gafencu's recent conversations in Paris.

2. Dealing first with Bulgaria, M. Tilea stated that they had found that the French view on this subject was more or less identical with that of the Roumanian Government, namely, that this was not the time to make territorial concessions to that country. M. Daladier had intimated privately that no confidence could be placed in the word of a Bulgarian. The French view might be summed up by saying that to force concessions from Bulgaria's neighbours at this moment would be to destroy the Balkan Entente.

3. Turning to Yugoslavia, the Minister went on to say that M. Daladier expressed himself as hopeful in regard to prospects in that part of the world; moreover, the Roumanian Minister at Berlin had recently reported that no pressure had been put on M. Cinkar-Markovic during his visit to Germany. In general, however, the Roumanian Government would be better informed in regard to Yugoslavia after the results of M. Gafencu's talks in Rome and Belgrade were known.

4. M. Tilea then spoke of Russia, and informed me that the French were not in favour of individual declarations by the Soviet Union and the other countries concerned. The French Government, he went on, still supported the idea of a three-Power pact, but they would like to reinforce this pact with a secret military understanding. M. Gafencu, on the other hand, had expressed himself as preferring the plan that His Majesty's Government were putting forward. While it was not, M. Tilea added, for Roumania to judge the worth of a secret Anglo-Franco-Russian understanding, the Roumanians would naturally be glad to learn the extent to which Russia was prepared to offer her assistance.

5. The Minister continued that the Roumanian Minister for Foreign Affairs and himself had gathered in Paris that the French had the impression that Italy would not join Germany in the event of war; but he did not reproduce any French arguments in support of this view. He added, while speaking of Italy, that they had received a report from the Roumanian Minister in Rome suggesting that Italy had now definitely changed the main objective of her foreign policy, and that it was the Balkans rather than the Mediterranean which now occupied the first place in her thoughts.

6. M. Tilea then said that he would like to draw my attention to one point in Herr Hitler's recent speech. The Führer had said that Roumania had asked for a common frontier with Germany. This was not the case. While it was true that Roumania had raised no objection to a common frontier between Hungary and Poland, what they had asked for was, if possible, a common frontier with Slovakia.

7. I thanked the Roumanian Minister for his courtesy in giving me this interesting account of the conversations in Paris. I added that the view of His Majesty's Government regarding the problem represented by Russia's association in the anti-aggression *bloc* remained the same: we adhered to the standpoint with which he was already familiar. I added that M. Litvinov appeared to be under a misapprehension on one point. He seemed to think that under our proposals the Soviet Government might have to assume an obligation to intervene irrespective of whether Great Britain or France came in or not. This was not the case. Under our proposal the Soviet Union would only have to honour her obligation if England and France had already taken action.

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

No. 339

Aide-mémoire from the French Ambassador¹ (Received May 2)

[R 3705/661/67]

AMBASSADE DE FRANCE, A LONDRES, 2 mai 1939

Le Gouvernement français a eu communication le 28 avril dernier de la lettre par laquelle le Ministre des Affaires Étrangères de Turquie avait

¹ This *aide-mémoire* was communicated to the Foreign Office by M. Cambon on May 2.

répondu la veille aux dernières démarches de Son Excellence l'Ambassadeur de Grande-Bretagne à Ankara.²

Il résulte de ce document qu'un sensible rapprochement paraît s'être effectué entre le point de vue turc et le point de vue anglais. De même, les éclaircissements donnés de vive voix à l'Ambassadeur de France par M. Saradjoglu paraissent tenir largement compte des observations qui se trouvaient présentées dans l'aide-mémoire du gouvernement de Sa Majesté, et ils offrent une interprétation satisfaisante, dans leur étendue et dans leur portée, des engagements que la Turquie se déclare prête à contracter.

Pour ce qui est de la coordination à établir entre les différents accords prévus entre la Turquie d'une part, la Grande-Bretagne et la France de l'autre, les préférences du gouvernement de la République vont nettement à un ajustement tripartite qui comporterait, sous condition de réciprocité, une garantie conjointe de la France et de la Grande-Bretagne.

L'Ambassade de France attacherait du prix à connaître le sentiment du Gouvernement britannique à cet égard.

² See No. 308. The letter was dated April 25.

No. 340

Letter from Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Sir A. Cadogan

[C 6603/54/18]

BRITISH EMBASSY, WARSAW, May 2, 1939

Dear Cadogan,

I note from Henderson's telegrams that there is a tendency among the Diplomatic Corps at Berlin to suggest that Poland, encouraged by the British guarantee, is adopting an unreasonable attitude as regards Danzig and minority questions.

I therefore thought it necessary in my telegram No. 129¹ of April 26 to put the matter as we see it from here. I fully admit that Danzig is in itself a bad wicket on which to make a stand and in normal circumstances it might be wiser for Poland to reconcile herself to the fact that she cannot indefinitely maintain her position there. I further have no doubt that the German minority here have not been treated with much consideration, though it is probable that recently they have given a good deal of provocation and that the local authorities, while restraining extreme feeling amongst the Poles as far as possible, have been compelled to take steps against Germans who have been unduly trailing their coats.

On the other hand it is not to my mind a question of Danzig or the minority but one of principle and of the method employed or to be employed by the Germans to attain their ends. I have on various occasions urged Beck to show moderation, but I do not think that we can go any further in this direction, as it might impair the highly patriotic spirit prevalent at present and further might make Beck say that he had been forced to yield to Germany under pressure from us.

¹ No. 290.

It is true that the Poles may regard the German menace too lightheartedly in view of their military weakness, compared with Germany, to which I have drawn attention in recent despatches and they may suffer a rude shock, if it comes to hostilities. But I do not think that we should do anything to discourage the calm firmness which they are showing at present. I imagine that you agree on this point, though of course if there are signs of public opinion getting out of hand and becoming unduly provocative, I will do what I can to exercise restraint.

As I said in my previous letter² to you, the main difficulty here at present is lack of money. This mobilisation for an indefinite period is costly for a country of such slender resources and they cannot without foreign financial aid develop their production of armaments as they could do. Their air force, heavy artillery, stocks of raw materials etc., are inadequate and they must obviously lose one of their main lines of communication with the outside world and many of their local sources of supply in the early days of any war. As to how long they could last under an overwhelming military pressure without any assistance from elsewhere, it is not possible to conjecture, but it could not be more than a few months or even weeks. I would therefore suggest that an early decision be reached as regards a British loan and that Staff conversations be initiated here without delay.

The Poles may in the last extremity accept aid from Russia, but how far would that be dependable or be provided in time to prevent the overrunning of the whole country? Unfortunately, though perhaps naturally, the Poles have no confidence in the Roumanian army and my French colleague is of opinion that we should have a strong military mission at Bucharest to keep them up to the mark.

Yours ever,
H. W. KENNARD

² See No. 266.

No. 341

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 3, 2.30 p.m.)
No. 348 Telegraphic [C 6463/54/18]

BERLIN, May 3, 1939, 1.30 p.m.

In conversation with Herr von Ribbentrop yesterday he said that the Chancellor would judge His Majesty's Government by facts not by words. Identical remark was made to me last week by the State Secretary (see my telegram No. 327¹). It undoubtedly emanated from Herr Hitler himself.

2. I presume that the reference is to the British guarantee to Poland and to the ability of His Majesty's Government to exercise moderating influence at Warsaw.

Repeated to Warsaw.

¹ No. 289.

No. 342

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 3, 2.30 p.m.)
No. 349 Telegraphic [C 6464/54/18]

BERLIN, May 3, 1939, 1.30 p.m.

It may well prove that sole prospect of peaceful solution of Danzig-Corridor question will depend on nature of Colonel Beck's reply to Herr Hitler on May 7. If it is of an uncompromising nature it will merely encourage extremists here to press for drastic and possibly immediate action.

2. In view of gravity of situation I feel it my duty to urge that His Majesty's Government should let it be known at Warsaw that they count on reply being genuinely such as to leave the door open for negotiations.

Repeated to Warsaw.

No. 343

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax
(Received May 4, 9.30 a.m.)
No. 181 Telegraphic [R 3599/661/67]

ANGORA, May 3, 1939, 4.25 p.m.

My telegram No. 178.¹

According to Minister for Foreign Affairs little progress is being made at present in negotiations with M. Potemkin who appears still to be awaiting instructions. Each party has given the other full particulars of their negotiations with His Majesty's Government and the French Government.

2. There is a slightly perceptible note of mistrust in Minister for Foreign Affairs' allusions to M. Potemkin. This may be solely due to the slow progress which is being made or to the fact that Minister for Foreign Affairs seems as yet not quite to know what M. Potemkin is driving at. It may be of no importance. I have noticed it in two ways. 1. Minister for Foreign Affairs has twice remarked that he finds M. Potemkin much changed from earlier times² in the direction of nationalism, racialism and in particular Slavism. He has said the same thing to my French colleague. 2. Both Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Secretary-General remarked to me independently last night that it was essential to have Russia firmly anchored to our side as it would be disastrous if a general war were to take place in which Russia remained neutral and at the end of which she would be *tertia gaudens*. I understand that Ismet has expressed the same view.

3. Minister for Foreign Affairs told me that M. Potemkin evidently desires that the understanding between the Soviet Government and His Majesty's Government should be close and mutual in character, somewhat on the lines of Franco-Russian agreement.

¹ No. 322.

² M. Potemkin was Soviet Consul-General and Counsellor at Istanbul, 1923-9.

4. Minister for Foreign Affairs told me that he had asked me the question reported in my telegram No. 180³ and that it had been put to him by M. Potemkin. Since sending that telegram I have received your telegram No. 95 to Moscow⁴ and have informed the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the last sentence of paragraph 1 thereof.

5. I expect to meet M. Potemkin at lunch on May 4.

Repeated to Paris, Moscow and Warsaw.

³ No. 332.

⁴ Not printed. This telegram of April 30 summarized the conversation with M. Maisky recorded in No. 316. The sentence referred to is the equivalent of that in paragraph 2 of the despatch beginning 'If this was, in fact, in the mind of the Soviet Government . . .'.

No. 344

*Sir W. Seeds (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 3, 6.30 p.m.)
No. 80 Telegraphic [C 6529/3356/18]*

MOSCOW, May 3, 1939, 6.20 p.m.

Your telegram No. 94.¹

Owing to the May day holidays I was unable to see M. Litvinov until this morning when I spoke to him in accordance with your instructions.

As regards the first point he made no comment but again produced the Soviet Ambassador's account of conversation of April 11.

As regards the second point he again asked whether there would be a declaration of war by His Majesty's Government in the event of aggression. I said that declarations of war were rather out of fashion these days but that under promises made to Poland and other countries an aggressor on such a country which resisted a clear threat to national independence would find himself in at any rate a state of war with Great Britain.

I trust I did not go too far. If so I can only plead that no good purpose would be served here by merely reiterating that His Majesty's Government would lend all support 'in their power'.

¹ No. 312.

No. 345

*Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 4, 9.30 a.m.)
No. 350 Telegraphic [C 6528/54/18]*

BERLIN, May 3, 1939, 9.25 p.m.

The Italian Ambassador informed me in strict confidence that Herr von Ribbentrop was going to the Italian lakes for a rest some time this month and would meet Count Ciano there.

2. General [*sic*] Göring left today for San Remo for some ten days or more. According to the Ambassador there was nothing sinister in either of these journeys. He added that Herr Hitler thought that time was on his side and

he would consequently, unless his hand was forced, not act with undue haste in the Polish question.

3. I attach value to this opinion in as much as Germany can this time scarcely make sudden *coup* against Poland without warning Italy in advance since the latter would equally be involved in the general war which would ensue.

4. Nevertheless it is important that M. Beck in his public reply to Herr Hitler should not define the exact limits beyond which Poland would never go lest by so doing he made it impossible (a) for Poland herself to recede from that position and (b) for Germany to consent to negotiate at all.

No. 346

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw)

No. 137 Telegraphic [C 6457/54/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 3, 1939, 10.0 p.m.

The press in this and other countries has been indulging recently in various interpretations of the guarantee given by His Majesty's Government to the Polish Government in particular in connexion with Danzig. On the one hand the guarantee of Polish 'independence' (as distinct from a guarantee of the 'integrity' of Poland) has been invoked as evidence that His Majesty's Government would not think unreasonable claims that Poland should agree to territorial modifications. On the other hand, it is asserted that Poland alone is judge of what threatens her independence, and that His Majesty's Government may be dragged into war by the resistance of an intransigent Poland to what might be considered to be reasonable demands which should be capable of peaceful adjustment.

2. His Majesty's Government, for their part, stand by the terms of the declaration which they have made to Poland, and their determination to implement it is as strong as their confidence that Poland would not lightly reject an equitable settlement because she felt that she would have the support of His Majesty's Government in any war that might ensue from such rejection.

3. His Majesty's Government have given their guarantee, and they mean to carry it out, but, that being the case, there are two points that they must emphasise.

4. In the first place they feel that the Polish Government must take them fully into their confidence. M. Beck, when in London, conveyed the impression that there had been no serious exchange of views with Germany on the question of Danzig, and it is only in reply to subsequent enquiries on the part of His Majesty's Government that we find that there has, in fact, been such an exchange. This is to be interpreted less as a reproach for the past than as a *desideratum* for the future. (See your telegram No. 1261.) While we have every confidence in the manner in which M. Beck will personally handle a

¹ No. 274.

situation that is obviously difficult and delicate, we have felt entitled, having regard to present position in which Great Britain and Poland stand to one another, to ask that M. Beck should give us full and early information of any demands made on him, and of his intentions and counter-proposals.

5. In the second place, our guarantee would come into operation if the Polish Government decided to offer resistance in a case where Polish independence was 'clearly' threatened. While His Majesty's Government naturally recognise that it is the Polish Government which must be the ultimate judge whether the independence of Poland was threatened I should not expect the Polish Government to abandon all hope of negotiation unless they were convinced that it afforded no possibility of averting a threat to Polish independence, and I should be confident that there would be little difficulty in reaching agreement between His Majesty's Government and the Polish Government that such a situation had in fact arisen. And I have no doubt that if the Polish Government wished to establish that there 'clearly' was such a threat, they would naturally desire to consult with His Majesty's Government and would therefore do so *before* taking any irrevocable action.

6. If the Polish Government fear that some immediate threat may develop requiring instantaneous counter-action on their part, on which there would be no time for consultation, I think they should inform us now of the manner in which they think such a threat might develop and of the steps which they would contemplate taking to avert or counter it.

7. I hope that you will put the above to M. Beck before he makes his speech, being particularly careful to give no room for any suspicion or misunderstanding that His Majesty's Government are trying to escape from the commitment which they have undertaken. We feel assured that the Polish Government will appreciate importance to both countries of fullest confidence.

8. Public opinion here is keenly interested in the state of Polish-German relations, and its judgement on the Polish attitude is likely to be affected by the reasonableness or otherwise of the case which M. Beck will put. From point of view of this country, opinion would be best assisted by a statement that was at once firm and unprovocative and which did not close any door to free and reasonable negotiation.

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

No. 347

Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)

No. 143 Telegraphic [C 6457/54/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 3, 1939, 10.10 p.m.*

My telegram No. 137 to Warsaw¹ is repeated to you for your own information only. You should not disclose to any of your colleagues, and of course

¹ No. 346.

not to the German Government, the line I have instructed His Majesty's Ambassador at Warsaw to take with the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Repeated to Warsaw and Paris.

No. 348

Viscount Halifax to Sir R. Hoare (Bucharest)

No. 186 Telegraphic [R 3570/661/67]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 3, 1939, 11.0 p.m.*

The Roumanian Minister, when giving me an account yesterday¹ of M. Gafencu's recent conversations in Paris, stated that the Roumanian Foreign Minister had found that the French view on the subject of Bulgaria was more or less identical with that of the Roumanian Government, viz. that this was not the time to make territorial concessions to that country. The French view might be summed up by saying that to force concessions from Bulgaria's neighbours at this moment would be to destroy the Balkan Entente.

Repeated to Sofia, Athens, Belgrade and Angora.

¹ See No. 338.

No. 349

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 4)

No. 164 Saving: Telegraphic [C 6550/54/18]

BERLIN, *May 3, 1939*

My telegram No. 162 Saving.¹

The anti-Polish press campaign continues unabated today. Front-page prominence is again given to what are called the ravings of the Warsaw and Cracow press. Their demands, such as the establishment of a Polish Protectorate over Danzig, a broader access to the Baltic for Poland and the cession of Silesia and East Prussia to Poland, are dismissed as being merely crazy. Poland, it is said, is playing with fire and is giving an exhibition of the worst possible kind of poisoning of European wells.

While the 'blank cheque' given by England to Poland is still deemed to be principally responsible for this outbreak of megalomania, it is also stressed that a large part of the blame should be laid at the doors of the new protectors of Poland, the Prime Minister and M. Daladier, for failing to check this inflammable mischief-making and for allowing the British and French press to add fuel to the flames. This, the commentators say, is a frivolous game, and the manner in which the aim of Polish policy is presented, especially in large sections of the British press, invariably shows a tendency to incite the Poles and to give them a feeling of strength.

Germany's attitude on the other hand is described as dignified and showing great tact. At no time during the last few days, it is said, had Germany

¹ Not printed. This telegram reported a violent attack on the Polish press in the 'Angriff' of May 2.

relinquished the peaceful intentions of her policy. Her offer in the question of Danzig had been formulated in such loyal terms that even hostile foreign circles had been unable to criticise it seriously. It had been necessary to proclaim to the world that Poland, in joining the front of the encircling Powers, had herself torn up the Polish-German Agreement of 1934. Nothing further, however, had been done and nothing of a threatening nature had been undertaken by Germany. The entry of German troops into Danzig, forecast over and over again, had not taken place for the very simple reason that it had never been planned. On the contrary it had been left to the discretion of Poland to come forward for her part with proposals, after the first great chance contained in the German offer had been missed owing to complete lack of vision.

Repeated to Warsaw.

No. 350

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 4)
No. 257 Saving: Telegraphic [C 6540/3356/18]

PARIS, May 3, 1939

My telegram No. 192.¹

Following is full summary of French reply.

French Government agree that essential object is to assure to France and Great Britain in case of war assistance from Soviet Government.

2. As it is extremely probable that conflict, if it arose, would be provoked by action of Germany against Poland or Roumania involving, under agreement reached between MM. Beck and Gafencu, belligerence of both, it is most desirable that Russian assistance be not provided for in form which arouses fundamental objection of Roumania or Poland or would affect their freedom of action diplomatic or military. Formula in French Note of April 24² was drafted with this in view.

3. But it is no less necessary that formula should comply with conditions of Soviet Government. To the knowledge of French Government:

(a) Soviet Government desire direct guarantee by France and Great Britain against attack by Germany and not only indirect guarantee, linked with assistance to be given by Russia to third Powers;

(b) Soviet Government may possibly still feel certain mistrust of Poland. Supposing crushing action by Germany against Danzig and Corridor led Poland to limit her losses by a quick peace, Russia probably wishes to be assured of French and British assistance in face of consequences from Germany to which her assistance to Poland might still expose her;

(c) Soviet Government appear to consider that German action against Baltic States would threaten her vital interests no less than action against Poland or Roumania. Hence M. Litvinov's *démarche* at end of March at

¹ No. 318.

² No. 280.

Tallinn and Riga³ and inclusion of Baltic States in Russian counter-proposals of April 19.⁴ Soviet Government certainly contemplate possibility of German attack, direct or indirect, through Baltic States which might be provoked by attitude they would have taken without reciprocity at request of France and Great Britain in favour indirectly of Poland and Roumania.

4. At same time French Government agree that it would be excessive at present stage to extend guarantee to Baltic States.

5. French Government agree that in event of conflict provoked by German aggression in Eastern Europe positions already taken by France and Great Britain would in fact assure to Soviet Government assistance they are asking to be guaranteed in advance and that discussion may seem academic. But Soviet Government may retort that if substance is agreed upon there can be no serious objection to giving the assurance.

6. Finally, Turkish Government seem to see in conclusion of a mutual tripartite Franco-Anglo-Soviet guarantee the necessary complement to the corresponding agreement under negotiation at Angora. Conclusion of former therefore up to a point conditions conclusion of latter.

7. These observations reinforce those in French Notes of April 24 and amplify them while taking into consideration views in British Note of April 29.⁵ With special reference to paragraph (2) of the latter French Government would willingly either include in draft agreement outlined in note of April 24 reservation that mutual assistance provided for would only be given in so far as requested and in form considered most opportune, or to introduce this limitation into the technical agreements determining means of execution.

8. Above observations are inspired by one motive only; that of concluding as rapidly as possible agreement permitting Roumania and Poland to receive assistance at least indirect from Russia. French Government fear that British proposal may meet with serious objections from Soviet Government. But if Soviet Government accepted British counter-proposal, French Government would raise no objection.

9. In handing Note to His Majesty's Minister, Political Director emphasised that it should not be regarded as putting forward objections of substance ('de fond'): it was based rather on doubts whether the Soviet Government could be brought to accept a proposal in the form suggested by His Majesty's Government. If, however, contrary to the French Government's expectation, the Soviet Government did accept proposal of His Majesty's Government, so much the better.

10. Copy of French Note in my despatch No. 568⁶ of May 3 by this bag.

³ See Nos. 181 and 300.

⁴ No. 201.

⁵ i.e. Sir E. Phipps' Note to the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs (not printed) embodying the terms of the instructions in No. 305. The paragraph numbers correspond to those of the telegram.

⁶ Not printed. This despatch gives the full text of the French Note. The Note was initialled 'G.B.'.

No. 351

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 4)

No. 258 Saving: Telegraphic [C 6541/3356/18]

PARIS, May 3, 1939

My telegram No. 257 Saving.¹

At request of Minister for Foreign Affairs the Political Director at the same time made oral communication to His Majesty's Minister to the following effect:

Since proposal in paragraph 3 of French Government's Note of April 24 (enclosure in my despatch No. 496² of April 24) had been communicated to me, M. Bonnet had had a conversation with Soviet Ambassador. Latter had seemed to suspect hidden objects in French and British Government's approach to Soviet Government. In the heat of the conversation, and in order to dispel suspicions of M. Souritch, M. Bonnet had given him text of French proposal modified on the spot with a view to meeting objections voiced by latter.

2. M. Bonnet wishes His Majesty's Government to know that Soviet Ambassador had this text and the circumstances in which it was given to him. Modified text, copy of which goes to you by this bag (my despatch No. 569³ of May 4) reads as follows:

'If France and Great Britain found themselves in a state of war with Germany as a result of the action which they had taken with a view to preventing all changes by force of the existing *status quo* in Central or Eastern Europe, the U.S.S.R. would immediately lend them aid and assistance.

'If the U.S.S.R. found itself in a state of war with Germany as a result of the action which it had taken with a view to preventing all changes by force of the existing *status quo* in Central or Eastern Europe, France and Great Britain would immediately lend it aid and assistance.

'The three Governments would concert without delay on the nature, in both cases contemplated, of this assistance and will take all steps to ensure its full efficacy.'

¹ No. 350.

² No. 280.

³ Not printed.

No. 352

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 6)

No. 120 [C 6663/237/55]

WARSAW, May 3, 1939

My Lord,

In my despatch No. 84¹ of the 5th April, I had the honour to give an account of the principal grievances of the German minority in Poland. As minority questions have recently shown signs of becoming more acute again,

¹ Not printed.

it may not be amiss if I now devote a further despatch to the subject and in particular to its effect on Polish-German relations.

2. First of all, it should be said that there is no parallel between the German minority in Poland and that in what was formerly Czecho-Slovakia. Owing partly to the way in which Poland's frontiers were drawn, there is now no district of Poland which has a German majority, still less a preponderance of Germans as was frequently found in the Sudetenland. The following table, based on the 1931 census, shows the minority's distribution:

<i>Voivodeship.</i>					<i>Number of Germans.</i>	<i>Percentage of Population.</i>
Poznan	...	...	...	...	193,000	9.2
Pomerania	...	...	...	...	108,000	9.8
Silesia	...	...	...	...	91,000	7.0
Lodz	...	...	...	...	155,000	5.9
Warsaw	...	...	...	...	74,000	2.9
Volhynia	...	...	...	...	47,000	2.3
Stanislawow	...	...	...	...	17,000	1.1
Lublin	...	...	...	...	16,000	0.6
Lwow	...	...	...	...	12,000	0.4
Krakow	...	...	...	...	9,000	0.4
Kielce	...	...	...	...	8,000	0.3
Bialystok	...	...	...	...	7,000	0.5
Tarnopol	...	...	...	...	3,000	0.2
Wilno	...	...	...	...	1,300	0.1
Brzesc	...	...	...	...	1,000	0.1
Nowogrodek	...	...	...	...	400	...

According to the Czech statistics of 1930 the areas ceded to Poland by Czecho-Slovakia last October contained in addition another 17,000 Germans or 7.9 per cent. of the population, but many of these have since left, and Dr. Grazynski, the Voivode of Upper Silesia, said in a recent interview that the present German population of the whole province was below 90,000, and did not greatly exceed 6 per cent. of the population.

3. Thus although there are probably over 700,000 persons of German race in Poland, they are very scattered and form a relatively small percentage both of the whole population of 34 million and also of any voivodeship or even district of Poland.

4. The policy of the Polish Government towards the German minority has so far as I am aware seldom been very explicitly stated, but it is probably not far wrong to quote the policy of the Polish Western Association, of which Dr. Grazynski is chairman, as in effect the policy of the Polish Government, at any rate in the western provinces, which are most affected. This policy may be stated as follows:

- (a) The German population may enjoy full rights of national and cultural activity, but may not claim any special privileges. (This latter

proviso means that they are expected to be loyal citizens of the Polish State, serve in the Polish army, &c., and may not, for instance, set up organisations which are under the orders of the head of another State.)

- (b) The existing superiority of the German minority in economic matters, which does not correspond to its real size, must be gradually and systematically levelled, principally by means of the systematic, rapid and unhampered development of Polish economic elements. (This, in fact, has covered a considerable amount of pressure of an administrative nature.)
- (c) The German minority must not be allowed to use its economic position (e.g., as landowners or employers) to depolonise Poles in Poland either by the exercise of economic superiority or by other means.
- (d) There must not be any disproportion between the situation of the German minority in Poland and the Polish minority in Germany.

5. The last point is one that has rankled a great deal here, and because the Polish minority in Germany are mostly labourers and workmen the Poles see no reason why their desire to preserve their language and culture should be lightly brushed aside. The Poles feel that in the unrivalled process of 'Gleichschaltung' in Germany their minority has come off badly. For instance, when Father Domanski, the veteran leader of the Association of Poles in Germany, died at the end of last month, the German authorities issued a ban on Polish hymns or speeches during the funeral celebrations (though the ban does not seem to have been observed). They also refused to allow Polish elementary schoolchildren to attend, and except for four persons would not grant visas for delegations from Poland. Persecution of priests for making sermons in Polish is frequently reported—generally from German Silesia—and so are cases of assault, as, for instance, on a party of Polish actors who were beaten up near Oppeln recently. I do not usually trouble to report these minor incidents; I only wish to mention that they cause continual irritation—as, no doubt, do those that also occur here from time to time.

6. To revert to the German minority in Poland, they have of late given up trying to wear white stockings, but they have certainly been trailing their coats a good deal. Every day there is published a fair list of cases of verdicts against Germans, for the most part living in Poland but occasionally in transit, for using expressions offensive to the Polish State or even for spreading 'defeatism'. There are also periodical cases of prosecution for belonging to illegal organisations. For instance, on the 1st May a number of girls of the German minority, 20–30 years old, were condemned in Gniezno to periods of imprisonment of from two to ten months for organising a secret branch of the 'Bund Deutscher Mädels', which is part of the Hitler-Jugend. And there have been other similar cases. The Polish authorities regard the morale of the country as vital for its defence, and will not have it undermined either by Nazi agents or by unpunished truculence on the part of the minority. This policy is also carried out in the commercial sphere. The firm of Henkel,

which makes 'Persil' and other washing materials, unwisely published some advertisements with an anti-Polish ring to them recently. The result was a boycott of their goods in many parts of Pomorze and Poznań, and in Gdynia their wares were seized by the Western Association and burnt at a public demonstration in the main square. There has also been a tendency for newspaper distributors to boycott German newspapers recently.

7. The foregoing picture of minority discontents may seem a gloomy one, particularly in view of M. Beck's remark that he would no longer regard the Minority Declarations of 1937 as valid now that Germany had denounced the Polish-German Pact of 1934 (see my telegram No. 130² of the 29th April). But the Minority Declarations of 1937 never made any real difference on either side to the actual treatment of the minorities, only to the publicity given to their complaints, and I do not suppose any difference will be made to the life of the minority here by the disappearance of the declarations.

8. Meanwhile, although the situation is one to which I shall devote careful attention, it seems to me important that His Majesty's Government should at all costs avoid appearing to admit that alleged ill-treatment of a minority might justify an act of aggression. The Polish Government, who show every sign of real caution in all material respects and have even prevented all non-official patriotic demonstrations on the 3rd May, the National Day, which might develop anti-German feeling, obviously have every interest in avoiding provocation, since, whatever the eventual outcome of a war, Poland must obviously undergo the most terrible sufferings at the outset.

9. But the recent experience of Czecho-Slovakia has shown how easy it is for purely fictitious minority incidents and complaints to be created, and if the Germans were once to get the impression that a serious incident might be held to justify aggression, I do not doubt that, if necessary, the incident could be created overnight.

10. The real problem, which dominates all others here, is whether or not Poland is to fall entirely into Germany's political, economic and military orbit. The minority problem, with which I have dealt at some length because of the publicity it is apt to receive, is an entirely secondary aspect of that question, a pawn which Herr Hitler will advance or ignore, magnify or belittle, according to larger strategic and tactical considerations. It would be most undesirable that we should, by attributing undue weight to this question, enable Herr Hitler to make an improper use of it.

11. I am sending a copy of this despatch to His Majesty's Ambassador in Berlin.

I have, &c.,
H. W. KENNARD

² No. 309.

No. 353

Sir W. Seeds (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 4, 11.30 a.m.)
No. 81 Telegraphic [N 2253/233/38]

MOSCOW, May 4, 1939, 11.40 a.m.

According to decree published in front page in this morning's press M. Molotov, President of Council of People's Commissars, has been appointed Commissar for Foreign Affairs in addition to his other duties.

2. Inconspicuous four-line notice on back page of newspapers states that Presidium of Supreme Council of U.S.S.R. has released M. Litvinov at his own request from his duties as Commissar for Foreign Affairs.

3. M. Litvinov gave me no inkling of this when I saw him yesterday.

No. 354

Mr. Gallienne (Tallinn) to Mr. Orde (Riga)
No. 2¹ Telegraphic [N 2285/64/63]

TALLINN, May 4, 1939, 2.50 p.m.

Addressed to Riga telegram No. 2 of May 4.

German Government today proposed to Estonian Government a treaty of non-aggression. Ministry for Foreign Affairs tells me that no conditions are attached.

Estonian Government is in communication with Scandinavian Governments. Proposal is likely to be acceptable.

¹ This telegram was addressed to Riga as No. 2, and was repeated as No. 2 to the Foreign Office, where it was received on May 4 at 4 p.m.

No. 355

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 4, 6.30 p.m.)
No. 139 Telegraphic [C 6546/54/18]

WARSAW, May 4, 1939, 4.39 p.m.

Your telegram No. 137.¹

I read the text of your telegram to the Minister for Foreign Affairs this morning and expressed the hope that he would appreciate the reasons for which you had felt it necessary to make these observations before his speech tomorrow.

2. M. Beck expressed his regret that there should have been any misunderstanding regarding his conversations in London about Danzig. The first formal intimation of the German demands had been made in Herr Hitler's speech and the German memorandum to Poland. The suggestion made to the Polish Ambassador in Berlin had not been made in a formal manner and nothing in writing had passed.

3. He assured me that no *casus belli* could arise in connexion with the

¹ No. 346.

Danzig question unless the Germans took forcible measures there and endeavoured to face Poland with a *fait accompli*.

4. As regards his speech and the reply to the German memorandum he could assure me that it would exactly correspond to the suggestion made in the last paragraph of your telegram. He intended to correct certain misleading passages in Herr Hitler's speech but while the tone of his speech would be firm, it would be in no way provocative on [*sic* ? or] close the door to further negotiations. He would generally bear in mind the considerations put forward in your telegram but felt sure that there would be no ground for future misunderstanding.

No. 356

Mr. Osborne (The Vatican) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 4, 6.45 p.m.)
No. 22 Telegraphic [R 3669/6/22]

THE VATICAN, May 4, 1939, 4.49 p.m.

Under-Secretary of State asked me to go to see him this morning and informed me that the Pope is about to address message to the Kings of England and Italy and the Presidents of France and Poland and Herr Hitler. Message will begin with a general appeal for peace and then proceed to urge the addressees to convoke conference to open negotiations on the issues threatening peace and more particularly the question of Danzig and the Corridor and the Italian claims against France.

2. I was informed that the first soundings in government quarters in Rome had been favourable and that the Pope would welcome similar intimation from London. I hope I may be authorised to give this.

3. Message is not yet quite complete and the date of issue not definitely decided but I expect it will be very soon.

No. 357

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax
(Received May 5, 9.30 a.m.)
No. 184 Telegraphic [R 3661/661/67]

ANGORA, May 4, 1939, 5.20 p.m.

My telegram No. 181.¹

M. Potemkin leaves Angora on May 5. He tells me he has communicated certain suggestions from his Government to the Turkish Government and that he is pleased with the result of his visit. I hope to see Minister for Foreign Affairs shortly and to obtain details.

2. M. Potemkin said that everything depended now upon the reply of His Majesty's Government to (? his Government)² and on our negotiations with Turkey. He added that a point of primary concern to Russia was to secure a satisfactory settlement of Bulgarian-Roumanian relations. He intends to see M. Kiosseivanoff on his way through Bulgaria.

¹ No. 343.

² The text is here uncertain.

3. He assured me that the disappearance of M. Litvinov made no difference to Soviet policy and had not affected the length of his stay here.
Repeated to Paris, Moscow, Warsaw, Sofia and Bucharest.

No. 358

Viscount Halifax to Sir A. Ryan (Durazzo)

No. 49 Telegraphic [R 3504/1335/90]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 4, 1939, 7.45 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 74.¹

While it is impossible in present circumstances to say definitely that Italy is not planning an attack on Greece, reports which we have been receiving from various quarters do not suggest that such an attack is contemplated in the immediate future, except perhaps as a move in a general war.

2. The Italian Government are already perfectly well aware that our own interests would not permit us to stand aside if Greece were attacked and they have been publicly warned of our position by the guarantee which we have recently given to Greece. Any ultimatum or further warning to Italy would therefore be unnecessary and dangerous.

3. It is not unnatural that the air should be thick with rumours, but it should be remembered that some of them are likely to be based on wild talk by irresponsible officials (and in Italy few people are in Signor Mussolini's confidence) and we know that some are deliberately put about in order to increase general state of apprehension. Therefore, though I agree that the situation needs very careful watching, I am not disposed on the information available to take too seriously these reports of an impending attack on Greece. I have spoken on these lines to the Greek Minister here who himself raised the question in a conversation on May 1.

4. For your own information I should add that we are inclined to share the view of the Yugoslav Military Attaché as reported in paragraph 4 of your telegram under reference that the Italian forces at present in Albania are not sufficient for an attack on Greece. We estimate those forces to amount to about 50,000 men; some more are probably being sent out in order to complete organisation of Italian troops in four divisions.

Repeated to Rome and Athens.

¹ No. 325.

No. 359

Sir W. Seeds (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 5, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 83 Telegraphic [N 2282/233/38]

MOSCOW, *May 4, 1939, 8.20 p.m.*

My telegram No. 81.¹

New appointment may only mean disappearance (so often foretold) of M. Litvinov together with a strengthening of the People's Commissariat for

¹ No. 353.

Foreign Affairs by the nomination of such an important political personage as M. Molotov.

2. Even in that case there is not only . . .² change as M. Molotov could not adequately discharge both his previous duties in the Government and Bolshevik party and also his new task in Commissariat for Foreign Affairs. Foreign representatives would consequently be in practice confined to negotiating with M. Potemkin or similar light-weight with but rare access to a People's Commissar whose ignorance of foreign languages³ and lack of experience in Foreign Affairs would not conduce to mutual understanding.

3. But far more important is question whether sudden change at a moment when our negotiations have from Soviet point of view been suspiciously held up for some two weeks, does not signify abandonment of M. Litvinov's policy of collective security (which might be regarded as being again on the verge of sustaining a rebuff from the Western Powers) and a decision to enter instead on a policy of isolation more in accord with M. Stalin's speeches. I regret that it is impossible for me or any foreign representatives to answer that question for the time being with any pretence of knowledge. We have not yet been officially notified of new appointment or of M. Molotov's readiness to receive us.

4. Meanwhile we can only hope for some guidance from local press—not necessarily in the form of a direct statement but more indirectly. Ever since M. Litvinov presented his proposals, in fact even before that, press has completely abstained from any comments whatever on British and French policy (appreciative articles⁴ if all went well) and has published satisfactory telegrams from London. It may perhaps be significant that today press does not report statement made by the Prime Minister yesterday⁵ that Anglo-Soviet negotiations were proceeding in friendly spirit. But we should be able to see more clearly in a day or two.

² The text is here uncertain. A pencil correction on the file copy of the telegram reads 'Even in that case I would lament change . . .'.

³ The file copy is annotated at this point by a suggestion that M. Molotov could speak 'quite good German'.

⁴ The words 'preparatory to' are written in pencil on the file copy before the words 'appreciative articles'.

⁵ The reference is to an answer by Mr. Chamberlain to a Parliamentary question on May 2. See Parl. Deb., 5th ser., H. of C., vol. 346, cols. 1697-9.

No. 360

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 5)

No. 260 Saving: Telegraphic [C 6547/54/18]

PARIS, May 4, 1939

A note of caution in regard to Danzig is sounded in certain organs of the French Press. For example, M. Bernus, in the 'Journal des Débats' of May 4,

advised Poland to keep on the solid ground offered to her by the German offensive. 'For the defence of her rights over Danzig and the Corridor, Poland can and should show herself intransigent, but she would weaken her resistance by transforming it into a kind of offensive. In any event, by rejecting the demands of the Reich, without allowing herself to be drawn on to another field, she would frustrate the manœuvre of Germany who is always on the look-out for the slightest tactical error.' M. Delebecque in the 'Action Française' and M. Marcel Déat (a former Air Minister) in an article entitled 'Die for Danzig?' in the 'Œuvre' go further, the latter saying that the French peasant has no desire to die for the Poldèves.¹

2. I feel bound to report the above articles, which reflect an uneasiness which is probably felt among sections of French opinion lest M. Beck should on his side precipitate a conflict without exhausting all reasonable possibilities of peaceful compromise in consultation with his ally. At the same time, the articles are suspiciously simultaneous. The Polish question has not hitherto been regarded so much from the aspect of Danzig as from that of resisting a settlement by force of the kind in which Germany has specialised during the past fourteen months. It is too early yet to say whether the Press articles referred to in the preceding paragraph will change this point of view, but I understand that M. Daladier himself attaches little importance to them, and that, while his daily correspondence last September was about equally divided, 90 per cent. to 100 per cent. is now in favour of resistance to further German aggression. This development of opinion is borne out by views expressed to myself and to members of my staff by various Frenchmen, who emphasise that Frenchmen everywhere now feel that they have had enough of Germany's aggressive policy. M. Bressy informed a member of my staff today that the articles could be disregarded and that they were embarrassing to M. Bonnet.

3. The semi-official 'Temps' this evening declares that after M. Beck's speech certain 'pourparlers' must doubtless be held, if only on the occasion of the suppression of the control of the League of Nations over Danzig, but that the hypothesis must not be excluded that the Reich would try, once more, to cut the Gordian knot with the sword. Then Poland, assured of the complete support of Great Britain and France, would oppose force to force. Whoever held Danzig commanded the Vistula and also the narrow Corridor. If Poland tolerated the military occupation of the Free City by the Reich, her free access to the sea and consequently her independence would appear to be gravely compromised.

¹ A mythical minority invented as a hoax.

Foreign Office Memorandum

[C 6605/54/18]

German proposals regarding Danzig and the Polish Corridor, and the Polish Counter-Proposals, March-April 1939

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 4, 1939

The following is a summary of all our information about the negotiations on this subject which have been carried on in Berlin and Warsaw during the past six weeks.

2. On March 22 (Warsaw tel. No. 74¹) the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs told His Majesty's Ambassador at Warsaw that he had no immediate fears about Danzig. He felt, however, that the Polish Government must have an exchange of views with the German Government and choose either to maintain the *status quo*, to draw up a provisional *modus vivendi*, or to reach a definite settlement.

3. On March 25 (Warsaw tel. No. 82²) the Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs told Sir H. Kennard that he thought the Danzig question must be discussed with Germany in some form before Easter.

4. On March 27 (Warsaw tel. No. 84³) the German Ambassador told Sir H. Kennard that no special steps had been taken on either side, but that the Danzig question was continually under discussion and efforts were being made to bridge the gap between the extreme German demands and the Polish objections thereto.

5. On March 28 (Berlin tels. Nos. 195⁴ and 204⁵) the Polish Ambassador in Berlin admitted to Sir N. Henderson that Danzig was at present under discussion mainly in Warsaw. He gave no indication that Germany was making demands or being truculent.

6. On March 28 (Warsaw tel. No. 88⁶) M. Arciszewski said that he could tell Sir H. Kennard nothing new about Danzig. Within the past fortnight the Polish Government had asked whether the German Government wished to discuss a modification of the Statute, but had not yet received any reply. They had reason to believe that Germany might demand annexation, but for the moment there was no indication of a threatening attitude on her part. Poland was ready to waive many, if not most, of the present limitations on Danzig's sovereignty, but would insist on her remaining a Free City. A motor road across the Corridor would probably also be conceded, but it would be difficult to grant it extra-territoriality privileges.

7. On the following day (March 29) (Warsaw tel. No. 91⁷) Sir H. Kennard again saw the Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs and asked if he could confirm the reports that Germany had demanded a change in the status of

¹ See Volume IV of this Series, No. 486.

² Ibid., No. 524.

⁴ Ibid., No. 550.

⁶ Ibid., No. 547.

³ Ibid., No. 534.

⁵ Ibid., No. 572.

⁷ Ibid., No. 564.

Danzig, a motor road across the Corridor and adherence to the Anti-Comintern Pact. M. Arciszewski was evasive. He said that these points did not amount to fresh demands, but were *desiderata* communicated to the Polish Ambassador in Berlin within the last fortnight. Moreover, as regards the last point, the German Government had done no more than request an explanation of the present Polish policy towards the Soviet Union and to suggest that this policy should be brought more nearly in line with Germany's attitude. No reply had been made by the Polish Government and the German attitude was not menacing.

8. On March 30 (Warsaw tel. No. 31 Saving⁸) the German Ambassador in Warsaw told Sir H. Kennard that no German demands had been put forward in the nature of an ultimatum, but that Danzig had been under discussion for some time.

9. When questioned on the point during an interview at the Foreign Office on April 1 (Foreign Office tel. to Warsaw, No. 74⁹) the Polish Ambassador in London said that there had been no recent negotiations with Germany, and that the German Government had put forward no definite demands regarding either the Corridor or Danzig. At the most there had been occasional feelers.

10. During his talks in London between April 4 and April 6¹⁰ M. Beck did not throw any light on the question. When questioned on the point by the Prime Minister he said that no negotiations were in progress, but that conversations had been going on for some time with the object of instituting a system in which Danzig would not be a burden upon German-Polish relations—it being essential of course that the status of the Free City should be maintained. In reply to further enquiries M. Beck answered as follows:

1. He had in mind a bilateral Polish-German arrangement which, while guaranteeing free government for the local population, would safeguard the existing rights of Poland in Danzig.
2. Poland would never tolerate any extra-territorial system in connexion with an 'autobahn' across the Corridor, but was prepared to facilitate transport by making arrangements about visas, customs duties, &c.
3. Discussions with the German Government had not passed beyond the stage of conversations. No written demands had been presented on the German side.

11. On April 18 (Warsaw tel. No. 117¹¹) Sir H. Kennard, acting on instructions, again approached M. Beck on the Danzig question. The latter would only say that when this matter was last discussed at Berlin the Polish Ambassador had intimated that Poland was prepared to negotiate but would not accept any unilateral decision, would regard any internal move on the part of the Danzig Senate as very serious, and any German military movement in their support as an act of aggression. He had let it be known that he

⁸ Not printed.

¹⁰ See Nos. 1, 2, 10, and 16.

⁹ See Volume IV of this Series, No. 598.

¹¹ No. 208.

wished to see the German Ambassador on his return to Warsaw after Herr Hitler's birthday. There was nothing more to be done for the moment.

12. On April 19 (Warsaw tel. No. 37 Saving¹²) the Counsellor at His Majesty's Embassy at Warsaw saw M. Beck's Chef de Cabinet. The latter would not say what concessions Poland could make over Danzig, but declared that the claims advanced in the German press (for the return of the Free City and a road across the Corridor) were inadmissible. He denied that Poland was refusing to negotiate.

13. On April 20 (Foreign Office tel. to Warsaw No. 114¹³) Count Raczyński, when questioned on the point at the Foreign Office, again said that he knew nothing about any Danzig negotiations, and did not believe that they were being actively pursued.

14. On April 22 (Warsaw tel. No. 122¹⁴) Sir H. Kennard, acting on instructions, asked the Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs for definite information about the German proposals. He said that about a month ago Herr von Ribbentrop, while making no formal demand, had proposed the incorporation of Danzig in the Reich and a corridor across the Corridor. The Polish Government were awaiting the return of the German Ambassador in the supposition that he would bring more detailed proposals. They could not of course agree to the restoration of Danzig, but were fully prepared to discuss a new Statute and realised that they would have to make certain concessions, such as the relinquishment of the conduct of Danzig's foreign affairs, the Polish postal service, &c. There was still a considerable gap between the extreme German demands and what the Polish Government felt they could offer.

15. On April 23 (Warsaw tel. No. 126¹⁵) M. Beck asked Sir H. Kennard to visit him so that he could explain the exact situation as regards Danzig. He confirmed what M. Arciszewski had said on the previous day, but admitted that on the same occasion Herr von Ribbentrop suggested that Poland should join Germany in a crusade against Russia. The Polish Government had refused to have anything to do with an Anti-Comintern combination, and had replied as follows to the other points through their Ambassador in Berlin.

1. They would not consider annexation of Danzig to the Reich, but were prepared to discuss a modification of the Statute, with perhaps a German-Polish guarantee.

2. They were prepared to give greater facilities for German communications across the Corridor, but without extra-territoriality.

The German Government had not yet replied.

16. This version of the facts may be compared with what the Polish Ambassador in Berlin told Sir N. Henderson on April 22 (Berlin tel. No. 317¹⁶). The two versions differ in the following particulars.

1. M. Lipski said that the German proposals had been accompanied by

¹² No. 221.

¹⁴ No. 263.

¹⁵ No. 274.

¹³ No. 234.

¹⁶ No. 254.

an offer to guarantee the existing Polish frontiers for a period of years (about 25–30 years).

2. He said that the request for an 'autobahn' across the Corridor had also been linked with an offer of guarantee for the Corridor.
3. He admitted that he had heard of a German offer to share with Poland and Hungary a condominium of Slovakia, but did not think it was yet official.
4. M. Lipski gives March 26 as the actual date when Herr von Ribbentrop put the German proposals to him.

17. The next account of the German proposals in chronological order is contained in Herr Hitler's speech on April 28. According to this version Herr Hitler had proposed:

1. The return of Danzig to the Reich.
2. The cession of a road and railway across the Corridor 'possessing the same extra-territorial status for Germany as the Corridor itself has for Poland.'

In return he had offered:

1. To recognise all Polish economic rights in Danzig.
2. To ensure for Poland a free harbour in Danzig of any size desired, with free access to the sea.
3. To regard as official the present Polish–German frontiers.
4. To conclude a 25-year non-aggression treaty with Poland.
5. A joint German–Polish–Hungarian guarantee of Slovakia.

The Polish Government had rejected this offer and were prepared to negotiate only on the question of a substitute for the League High Commissioner, and to consider facilities for transit traffic through the Corridor.

18. M. Beck told Sir H. Kennard on April 29 (Warsaw tel. No. 131¹⁷) that Herr Hitler in his speech had minimised the importance of the Polish counter-proposals. He had not brought out that Poland was prepared to agree to serious modifications of the Statute and to waive all customs and visa formalities in the Corridor.

19. The latest information about the German proposals was given by Herr von Ribbentrop in his interview with Sir N. Henderson on May 2 (Berlin tel. No. 343¹⁸). He said that proposals on the lines indicated in Herr Hitler's speech had been adumbrated as long ago as last October, and definitely discussed with M. Beck at Berchtesgaden¹⁹ last January (the only point not raised then being of course the joint guarantee of Slovakia). In reply to specific enquiries from Sir N. Henderson, Herr von Ribbentrop said that the Polish rejection of the proposals had taken place after the German action against Czecho-Slovakia on March 14, and that during the Berchtes-

¹⁷ No. 320. This telegram was dated April 30.

¹⁸ No. 333.

¹⁹ *Note in original*: Count Raczynski told Mr. Strang on May 1 [see No. 326] that Herr Hitler only touched lightly on the subject then, but that Herr von Ribbentrop raised it in an unpleasant and rather challenging way.

gaden discussions M. Beck's attitude had been non-committal. He added that the German Ambassador would not have any special instructions on the subject when he returned to Warsaw. Herr Hitler had made his offer and would not repeat it.

20. From the above information the following account of the German proposals and Polish counter-proposals can be pieced together. The question of the restoration of Danzig and a motor road across the Corridor were mentioned to M. Beck by Herr Hitler and Herr von Ribbentrop at Berchtesgaden last January when hints were also dropped about co-operation against Russia, and in regard to Slovakia. Further discussions of which we have no details apparently took place between Berlin and Warsaw, and led to a verbal communication from Herr von Ribbentrop to the Polish Ambassador in Berlin on April [*sic* ? March] 26. This communication comprised a definite request for the return of Danzig and a motor road across the Corridor, in return for the recognition of Polish economic rights in the Free City and a 25-year guarantee of the German-Polish frontier; there was a further suggestion of co-operation against Russia (of which we have no details), and a suggestion for a tripartite guarantee of Slovakia (but the Poles are very reticent about this). The Polish Government had turned down these proposals, but had offered to discuss a modification of the Danzig statute with perhaps a German-Polish guarantee, and to give greater facilities for German communications across the Corridor, including the waiving of customs and visa formalities. The German Government have not yet replied to these Polish counter-proposals.

21. These are the facts as we have at last succeeded in worming them out of the Poles; but the latter have all along shown a most remarkable disinclination to tell us the truth. Right up to April 20 Count Raczynski continued to deny all knowledge of the discussions, but he may well have not been informed from Warsaw of what was going on. M. Beck and M. Arciszewski, however, cannot be acquitted. The latter in particular deliberately misled Sir H. Kennard on March 28 two days after the receipt of the German proposals (see paragraph 6) when he gave it to be understood that no proposals at all had yet been made. M. Beck was equally misleading in what he said in London, for he still gave the impression that there had merely been an informal exchange of ideas instead of definite proposals and counter-proposals. Even when he professed to give Sir H. Kennard an honest explanation of all that had happened on April 23 (paragraph 15) he still only told part of the truth, making no mention of the proposed 25 years' German guarantee or the tripartite guarantee of Slovakia, although M. Lipski had the previous day revealed the 25 years' guarantee offer to Sir N. Henderson, and had touched upon the point about Slovakia (Mr. Norton, however, says that the Poles have given a categoric assurance that no actual proposal was ever made).

22. It may be useful to point out that at the time of the announcement of our guarantee of Poland on March 31 our information about the proposals was based on what M. Arciszewski had told Sir H. Kennard on March 29

(paragraph 7). We thus merely knew that within the past fortnight the German Government had communicated *desiderata* regarding the return of Danzig, a motor road across the Corridor, and co-operation against Russia. We had no knowledge of the so-called concessions which accompanied these *desiderata*. We had no positive knowledge of the Polish reply (which may not have been made by then), but knew the general lines it was likely to take—M. Arciszewski had indicated them to Sir H. Kennard on the previous day.

R. L. SPEAIGHT

No. 362

The Apostolic Delegate to Viscount Halifax (Received May 4)

[R 3670/6/22]

LONDON, May 4, 1939

Dear Lord Halifax,

I am commanded by the Pope to inform His Majesty's Government that His Holiness proposes to send a paternal message to the five Powers mentioned in the memorandum which I enclose. I am asked to inform the Cardinal Secretary of State as soon as possible as to the attitude of His Majesty's Government in the event of any step taken by His Holiness in this regard.

+ WILLIAM GODFREY
Archbishop of Cius
Apostolic Delegate

ENCLOSURE IN NO. 362

The Holy Father Pope Pius XII, deeply concerned by the increased danger of a conflagration, proposes to send a paternal message to the five Powers, England, France, Germany, Italy and Poland, in order to invite them to discuss in conference the questions which threaten to provoke a conflict.

In sending this message His Holiness, without going into the particulars of the questions involved, would propose as purpose of the conference, the peaceful solution of those questions, and others deriving from them, concerning which Germany and Poland, France and Italy, are not in agreement.

No. 363

Sir P. Loraine (Rome) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 10)

No. 399 [R 3835/86/22]

ROME, May 4, 1939

My Lord,

I have the honour to transmit to Your Lordship the accompanying copy of a memorandum by the Military Attaché to this Embassy regarding the progress made by the Italian army since the beginning of the year.

2. Your Lordship will observe that, although the invasion of Albania may be cited as an example of the great progress made by the Italian army in

military organisation on a large scale, in Colonel Brocas Burrows's opinion it is probable that the military measures taken during the last five months to meet the various situations which have arisen have delayed the proposed reorganisation of the army and placed it in a state of preparedness for war which is less advanced than it was twelve months ago, and that at the present moment the army is not in a condition to undertake a war on a large scale.

I have, &c.,

PERCY LORAINÉ

ENCLOSURE IN No. 363

Memorandum respecting the Italian Army

The beginning of the year 1939 found the Italian army carrying out a fundamental reorganisation of its infantry divisions based on experience gained in the wars in Spain and Abyssinia. This reorganisation involved a reduction in size and cumbersomeness of the divisions concerned and the formation of new divisions to absorb the units extracted from the old ones.

2. Obviously a period of quiet was required to enable the General Staff to reorganise these new formations before the 1939 training season. The reverse has been the case, and, though no evidence is as yet available, it is probable that the military measures taken during the last five months to meet the various situations which have arisen have delayed the reorganisation and placed the army in a state of preparedness for war which is less advanced than it was twelve months ago.

3. The framework of the new organisation is, I think, completed, but it is doubtful whether there is sufficient equipment or artillery to enable the army to take the field at anything approaching full strength.

4. A decree-law passed in January 1939 permitted the General Staff to call up 60,000 men of the 1901 class. This class missed the Great War and served with the colours immediately after it. The reason given for this measure was that it was important to ascertain what the state of fitness of men of this class was, but later it was admitted that the measure was intended to relieve unemployment and give a 'political bath' to those who needed it. As the political situation developed the measure was extended to the classes 1902-08.

5. At the end of March the annual class of conscripts (1918 and the first quarter of 1919) was called up, and also a number of men of the 1915, 1916 and 1917 classes, who had previously been excused, were called to the colours. Shortly afterwards it was admitted in the press that the whole of the 1901 and 1912 classes were with the colours and that Italy had 1 million men under arms. The reason given for this extraordinary measure was that the political situation demanded it and that as neither the 1901 class nor the recruits of the 1918-19 class were fit to take the field it was necessary to call up the 1912 class (men of 27 years old) to provide suitable troops for any emergency.

6. The disturbing factor in these measures is the secrecy with which they were carried out. On the other hand, there is ample evidence that uniforms and equipment are lacking, and that in many cases the reservists have not

undergone military training owing to a shortage of officers and instructors. Many of the men of the older classes are being used for constructional work on roads and buildings in Libya.

7. These measures have enabled the General Staff to make some progress in post-military training, which had been neglected in previous years, and the pre-military training in the various youth organisations is now found to be so efficient that it is intended shortly to reduce the period of conscript service.

8. Owing to the tense situation with France and reports of French troop concentrations on the frontiers adjoining Italy and Libya all overseas garrisons have been brought to war strength, but I have no information of the addition of new formations to these garrisons or of any contravention of Annexure II of the Anglo-Italian Agreement.

9. The invasion of Albania was an example of the great progress made by the Italian army in military organisation on a large scale. Although the opposition was negligible, it was no mean feat to transport a force of about 30,000 men, disembark it in Albania at three separate ports and occupy all the strategic points in the country in so short a time. The General Staff has undoubtedly learnt valuable lessons from experience in Abyssinia and Spain.

10. The increase in the number of divisions of the regular army and the presence with the colours of so many reservists have brought to light a shortage of suitable officers and instructors and resulted in the submission to the Council of Ministers of a law which proposes to give army rank to officers of the militia who, by their prowess in war, have shown themselves worthy of holding it. This measure is an interesting step towards the removal of the barrier between these two forces.

11. In conclusion, I am of the opinion that the reorganisation of the army has been severely hampered by the measures taken to face the various crises during the last few months, and that at the present moment the army is not in a condition to undertake a war on a large scale.

No. 364

Letter from Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax

[C 6799/54/18]

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, May 4, 1939

Dear Secretary of State,

Though the signs point to a period of lull, provided no grave incident unexpectedly intervenes, I am filled with the gloomiest forebodings for the future and am far more apprehensive of war than ever I was last September.

Once again the German case on the immediate issue is very far from being either unjustifiable or immoral. If an impartial Martian were to act as arbitrator I cannot believe that he would give judgment otherwise than more or less in accordance with Hitler's offer. Did he count on its being refused?

My thesis has always been that Germany cannot revert to normalcy [*sic*] which, under pressure of public opinion, she might well yet do, until her

legitimate¹ (in German eyes) aspirations have been satisfied. The Danzig-Corridor question was, with Memel, one of these (see my despatch No. 315² of March 9).

It must be borne in mind that Danzig and the Corridor was *the* big question prior to 1933. One of the most unpopular actions which Hitler ever did was his 1934 Treaty with Pilsudski. He had the whole of his party against him. Today all the most moderate Germans, who are opposed to a world war, are behind him in his present offer to Poland. It is only the extremists (who want much more, i.e. the whole Corridor and Posen and Silesia &c.) who will rejoice if the Poles are uncompromising. The Poles are thus merely playing the extremist game for them. According to my Belgian colleague, practically all the diplomatic representatives here regard the German offer in itself as a surprisingly favourable one. The Dutch Minister, the United States Chargé d'Affaires and my South African colleague have themselves spoken to me in that sense. I consequently ask myself whether, if we are going to fight Germany, is it well-advised to do so on a ground on which the world will not be united as to the immorality of Germany's case? Will even our Empire be united? Of course the underlying motive of war will be something far deeper and more important than just Danzig itself, and, even though agreement were reached in Danzig, it is always possible or even probable that the extremist elements here would press later for further concessions which Poland might not then be in a position to refuse. Even so I am appalled at the thought of Danzig being even the ostensible cause, and I am even more appalled at our fate being in the hands of the Poles. Heroic no doubt but foolhardy and ask anyone who knows them whether they can be trusted. Did Beck even play fair in London over the German offer? Ribbentrop asked me yesterday whether Beck had informed His Majesty's Government when he was in London of the German offer. I was obliged to say that I honestly did not know: to which Ribbentrop replied that his information from London was to the effect that he did not.

One thing we must realise is that though a general war is of course still utterly unpopular here, the nation will be much more united in support of Hitler than it would have been last September—before our advances to Russia and the encirclement cry. On the Polish issue itself it will be far more enthusiastic than over the Sudeten or even the Czechs.

I did not like Hitler's allusions in his May Day speeches to the possibility of the nation being called upon to make sacrifices. He has got his teeth into the Danzig question and he is not going to let go.

We stepped into the Polish breach and gave our guarantee unconditionally and I rack my brains as to how we are going to find a satisfactory issue out of our present eastern obligations. I suppose it is too optimistic to hope that some L/N decision or form of arbitration could be found for a settlement of the Danzig and Corridor issues.

The German people is sick of adventure but Poland and the Corridor with

¹ A Foreign Office marginal comment at this point reads: 'What about Czechs?'

² See Volume IV of this Series, No. 195.

the spectre of 'encirclement' and 'Soviet Russia' in the background is [*sic*] a battle cry which would be more likely than any other to rally the whole nation. It may well be true that Hitler preferred to have his offer turned down. From several sources I have heard hints to that effect. If it is true it only confirms me in my personal belief that the Poles, just like Schuschnigg and Benes, are persisting in playing Hitler's game for him.

Personally I incline to believe that Hitler, as the Italian Ambassador tells me, in fact regards time to be on his side and would prefer to play a waiting game. If so and if we let things drag on as we did in 1938, I fear we shall be faced with another autumn crisis. On the other hand, if the Poles believe that such is Hitler's intention, it is they who will seek to precipitate an incident. Either way it is an unpleasant prospect.

NEVILLE HENDERSON

No. 365

Letter from Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Sir A. Cadogan
[C 6739/54/18]

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, *May 4, 1939*

I constantly hear reports which cannot be disregarded that the Nazi Party leaders, including of course Ribbentrop, believe that England is still unprepared in the last resort to go to war.

I realise the danger of this frame of mind, just as I realise equally the danger of any precipitate public declarations such as, being regarded as provocative by the dictators, are calculated to drive them for the sake of their prestige to adopt the very course which such declarations are intended to prevent.

I consequently asked my Italian colleague the other day whether he noticed this tendency on the part of Ribbentrop or others. In his opinion there was a difference between now and in September last. The Ribbentrop crowd then believed that Britain would not fight because she was not ready. Today that crowd did not believe that Britain would fight over a question like Danzig.

That is, I think, probably the true explanation, and certainly Ribbentrop did not give me the impression that he thought we were averse to war. Quite the contrary: he seemed to think we were seeking it. Incidentally I made it clear to Attolico that if war broke out over Danzig it would not be Danzig itself which was the cause but the principle of armed aggression.

NEVILLE HENDERSON

No. 366

Letter from Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Sir A. Cadogan
[C 6738/54/18]

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, *May 4, 1939*

Attolico told me quite definitely yesterday that the whole trouble with Poland was based on the Slovakia issue. Poland had been warned of the

Bohemia and Moravia *coup* and had given their assent to it in the belief that Slovakia would fall in return to themselves and the Hungarians. The Slovak appeal for German protection upset the whole of this arrangement and Beck felt himself duped. *Hinc illae lachrymae* [*sic*] and the somewhat abrupt turning down of Hitler's offer. Had Beck got Slovakia as a set-off, he might have given up Dantzig without being too criticized by his own people.

All this has probably a good deal of truth in it. We are dealing with very slippery customers both at Berlin and Warsaw.

NEVILLE H.

No. 367

Letter from Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Sir O. Sargent

[C 6927/54/18]

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, May 4, 1939

Dembinski, the principal Polish journalist here, who is very much in the confidence of his Ambassador and well informed on Polish opinion, told the Financial Adviser today in the course of negotiations for the lease of his flat that Great Britain and Poland wanted to make war on Germany as Germany was still comparatively weak. Dembinski is apparently expressing these views quite openly. It has struck Mr. Trentham that this is a dangerous moment for a person in Dembinski's position to talk in this manner.

On the other hand, Holburn, correspondent of 'The Times', informed Bashford¹ yesterday that Herr Halfeld, Berlin correspondent of the 'Hamburger Fremdenblatt' yesterday evening told him that the German Government had deliberately played for a rejection by Poland of the German proposals regarding Danzig and the Corridor and that they had feared nothing more than Polish acceptance of the offer.

From his conversation with Herr Halfeld and from other conversations with equally well-informed persons, Holburn has gained the impression that Herr Hitler is aiming at a partition of Poland resulting in the annexation or, in Herr Hitler's view, the return of all former German territory in Poland and possibly more. He will probably, unless 'incidents' in Poland make him change his plan of campaign, employ the same or a similar technique as in Austria and Czechoslovakia and will attempt to achieve his end by a process of disintegration of Poland from within. Danzig, in Herr Hitler's view, is a mere pawn in the game, useful for propaganda purposes, but in view of the British and French attitudes, unlikely in itself to start the ball rolling. Herr Hitler will bide his time and will not strike until he thinks Poland is 'ripe'. That moment may not come until he has either succeeded in weakening Poland from within or until he has manœuvred and provoked her into a position which will force her to strike first. In the latter event, Herr Hitler appears to be hoping that Great Britain and France will not feel themselves bound by their guarantee.

A pleasant outlook.

NEVILLE HENDERSON

¹ Mr. Bashford was Press Attaché at His Majesty's Embassy in Berlin.

No. 368

Sir P. Loraine (Rome) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 5, 9.30 a.m.)
No. 429 Telegraphic [R 3636/1335/90]

ROME, May 5, 1939, 1.15 a.m.

Sir A. Ryan's telegram No. 71¹ to Foreign Office and previous telegrams regarding military situation in Albania.

Military Attaché considers that even if total of Italian troops in Albania is 60 to 65,000 men it is doubtful if this constitutes a serious or immediate threat to Greece or Yugoslavia bearing in mind difficult country along the Greek and Yugoslav frontiers.

Yugoslav Military Attaché in Rome agrees with this view and his theory is that Italians sent their best troops (1st Grenadiers and Bersaglieri) and are now sending over ordinary line troops who will eventually replace them. If this is so evacuations of some units should shortly begin to take place. In Military Attaché's view that would probably not take place at Durazzo since it appears that Italians wish to exaggerate their forces in Albania and evacuations from that port would be seen and reported. Incidentally Italian press this morning reports return to Pola of 'San Marco' Marine battalion which took part in original invasion of Albania.

Repeated to Durazzo.

¹ Not printed. See No. 325, note 1.

No. 369

Sir P. Loraine (Rome) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 5, 9.30 a.m.)
No. 430 Telegraphic [R 3657/399/22]

ROME, May 5, 1939, 1.15 a.m.

Yesterday evening¹ I sought an interview with the Roumanian Minister for Foreign Affairs who received me shortly before he departed for Belgrade.

2. He told me that his conversations with the Italian Government had been conducted in a very friendly and affable spirit on the Italian side.

3. Signor Mussolini had stated emphatically that Italy's solidarity with Germany was unshakeable. But Signor Mussolini had added that *up to the present* Italy had not committed herself to any signed engagement with the Reich.

4. M. Gafencu inclined to attach special significance to the words underlined above² as Count Ciano quoted them to him verbatim in a subsequent interview. He interprets them to mean that unless Signor Mussolini within a brief space of time, maybe only a few days, can obtain some friendly advance from the United Kingdom and France particularly the latter, he may consider it necessary to enter into a formal alliance with Berlin. But

¹ i.e. on May 3. This telegram was drafted on May 4.

² Printed here in italics.

M. Gafencu feels that Signor Mussolini from the point of view of his own position will make no overture but will continue to await an initiative from London and/or Paris.

5. Signor Mussolini had categorically stated that he was not making any territorial claims on France and mentioned the three points on which he desired satisfaction viz: roughly, free port at Jibuti and a share of the railway: reversion to 1896 arrangement as regards the status of Italians in Tunis: Italian representative on the board of the Suez Canal Company &c. (I hear elsewhere that in Italian circles these are described as Italy's *minimum demands*.)

6. When I asked M. Gafencu whether he had not perhaps been treading on rather delicate ground he said he had received an intimation from Paris that it would not be unwelcome if he could elicit a clearer statement of Italian *desiderata* in these matters and he therefore felt that he had some status as an honest broker.

7. M. Gafencu's further observations made me think he was too optimistic about the facility with which a Franco-Italian understanding about these matters could be reached and about the likelihood of the French Government being willing to take the initiative in a case in which it was the Italians and not they who were asking for. . . .³ (I was mindful at the time of the detailed explanation of the French Government's attitude . . .⁴ of ideas given me last Monday in Paris by M. Léger in the presence of Sir E. Phipps⁵.) M. Gafencu listened attentively and with sympathy to my remarks especially when I asked him what counter value could be expected from Italy and reminded him of the failure of earlier . . .⁶ to obtain any tangible mark of Italian gratitude or even so far as we could judge to lessen Signor Mussolini's dependence on or attachment to the Axis. Obviously the role of my own Government and of my own task in Rome would be greatly facilitated by a friendly settlement of the Italian claims on France and we therefore had a very serious interest in promoting agreement to that end: but I had to reflect what results would be. The benefit to Italy was clear, but Signor Mussolini might quite well merely pocket it as a trick to strengthen the Axis. The benefit to France and to the United Kingdom was far less obvious unless of course the settlement was accompanied by a reliable guarantee of Italian co-operation in other spheres with the United Kingdom and France. Could we reasonably anticipate that? For myself I felt it was unlikely.

8. I think this rather shook M. Gafencu's optimism and he did not deny the force of my arguments. But he nevertheless seemed to fear that unless something could be done in the very near future to bring France and Italy closer together Signor Mussolini might take the bit in his teeth and imprison himself in a written alliance with. . . .⁷

³ The text is here uncertain. It was subsequently corrected to read 'concessions'.

⁴ The text was here subsequently corrected to read 'in this order'.

⁵ No record of this conversation appears to have been received in the Foreign Office.

⁶ The text was here subsequently corrected to read 'concessions'.

⁷ The text was here subsequently corrected to read 'the Reich'.

9. Lastly M. Gafencu gathered a distinct impression that Signor Mussolini did not regard the Axis as an *exclusive combination* (though of course an Italian-German alliance would make it so); that Signor Mussolini still hankers after a great Power pact *à quatre*.

Repeated to Paris and Bucharest.

No. 370

Sir P. Loraine (Rome) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 5, 9.30 a.m.)
No. 431 Telegraphic [R 3658/7/22]

ROME, May 5, 1939, 1.15 a.m.

Please see my immediately preceding telegram.¹

It seemed better before telegraphing to you about my interview with Roumanian Minister for Foreign Affairs to check up with my French colleague and I therefore went to see the latter this morning.²

2. I found that he had seen M. Gafencu yesterday evening after I had left the latter and he was therefore already acquainted with M. Gafencu's views and impressions.

3. He told me frankly that since events of March 15 he had come round to [the] view that every effort must be made to see whether there was a terrain for settlement of Italian claims on France, always supposing, of course, that there were no territorial claims.

4. He had naturally reported to his Government Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs' remarks to him last week³ about the nature of the Italian claims and felt discouraged by the reply from Paris that these remarks were not sufficiently clear or specific to offer basis for conversations.

5. He may take the opportunity to request Minister for Foreign Affairs to develop his ideas further but feels that his present instructions do not permit him to go further than this. But he also feels that unless the opening given by Count Ciano is not [*sic*] grasped, those who failed to seize that opportunity of Franco-Italian settlement will be rightly called to account if matters drift towards war.

6. He anticipates rather confidently that when I see him Signor Mussolini will seek our active assistance in bringing French Government to conversations with a view to satisfying Italian demands.

7. French Ambassador also seems to think that Signor Mussolini, in order to render himself more independent of Berlin, might now abandon the objections he has hitherto entertained to multilateral agreements, and be willing to consider some comprehensive Mediterranean settlement and so to ensure less tension and greater stability in that part of the world at least.

Repeated to Paris.

¹ No. 369.

² This telegram was drafted on May 4.

³ See No. 298.

No. 371

Sir P. Loraine (Rome) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 5, 9.30 a.m.)
No. 432 Telegraphic [C 6587/54/18]

ROME, May 5, 1939, 1.15 a.m.

My French colleague and I discussed this morning¹ the strained situation which has arisen between Germany and Poland since Poland's rejection of Herr Hitler's proposals about Danzig and the Corridor and Herr Hitler's denunciation of the German-Polish Pact.

2. We are agreed in thinking that the Italian Government view this situation with considerable anxiety; that Italian feeling is very strong against being involved in war or [*sic* ? on] any such issue; and that Count Ciano when he meets Herr von Ribbentrop at the end of this week is sure to counsel moderation.

3. Since then my Counsellor has learnt from the Soviet Chargé d'Affaires that my Turkish colleague was told yesterday by Count Ciano that he intends to do all he can to urge on Herr von Ribbentrop the desirability of a peaceful solution of the German-Polish difficulty.

¹ This telegram was drafted on May 4.

No. 372

Sir P. Loraine (Rome) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 5, 9.30 a.m.)
No. 433 Telegraphic [N 2263/233/38]

ROME, May 5, 1939, 1.15 a.m.

Following for Sir A. Cadogan:

I should be very grateful to know your appreciation of the significance of M. Litvinov's resignation.

My French colleague propounds the astonishing theory that Stalin has sacked him in order to make an arrangement with Germany which would of course enable the latter to attack Poland and retake the Corridor with relative impunity.

I find this very difficult to swallow.

Since I drafted the foregoing the Soviet Chargé d'Affaires has informed my Counsellor of a telegram from Moscow saying that the substitution of Molotov for Litvinov signifies no change whatever in Russian policy.

No. 373

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received May 5, 10.30 a.m.)
No. 356 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 6682/16/18]

BERLIN, May 5, 1939

I had a long conversation with the German Ambassador today who leaves tonight for London by the same train as the German Ambassador in Paris.

2. He was much concerned over the expulsions from England¹ but I told him that I could give him no comfort on that subject and that in the matter of reprisals we could go on longer than they could.

3. He assured me of real German fears in regard to encirclement i.e. blockade and also as to inflation. In this latter respect he may have been speaking as a Silesian landowner.

4. Though he did his best to justify the action of his Government he was as usual moderate in his own views and sincere in his own desire for a period of calm which might he hoped lead to an improvement in Anglo-German relations.

5. I warned him that he would if he did not already realise it be unpleasantly surprised at the deterioration of feeling in England towards Germany (he replied he was broad-minded enough to admit this) and I made it quite clear to him that it was not the question of (? Danzig) which was dangerous but our determination not to tolerate further armed aggression by Germany just because she happened to be stronger than her neighbours.

6. The Ambassador seemed relieved that M. Beck in his speech this morning² had at least not claimed Danzig as a Polish town.

¹ See No. 223, note 1. Dr. Rosel of the 'National-Zeitung' had also recently been asked to leave the country.

² See No. 386.

No. 374

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw)

No. 143 Telegraphic [C 6802/92/55]

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 5, 1939, 12.15 p.m.

1. M. Beck said in London that he would if possible make a suggestion as to treatment of Danzig question by Committee of Three before next meeting, if not he would leave matter in hands of His Majesty's Government. M. Beck then hoped to make an agreement with the Germans, but situation has changed as result of recent events.

2. I no longer propose to hold meeting of Committee in London, but to wait until Geneva on May 15.

3. Main questions are responsibilities of League in Danzig and position of High Commissioner. It is not clear what function latter can now perform. Danzig Constitution as result of repeated violations is now in practice abrogated and League guarantee therefore meaningless. Danzig question now lies between Poland and Germany rather than between Poland and Danzig, and High Commissioner is hardly in position to fulfil his primary task of dealing with problems arising between Danzig and Poland. It is difficult to see what useful purpose would be served by his return to Danzig in these conditions. At same time I do not wish to render situation more difficult either by proposing action by Council having effect of modifying

Treaty or juridical position, or by placing Danzig question on Council agenda and provoking public debate, or indeed in any other way.

4. I anticipate that there will be considerable pressure in the Committee of Three to accept High Commissioner's resignation, which in the circumstances would be likely to be forthcoming, on the ground that the conditions in which he was called upon to carry out his functions do not at present appear to exist. As regards responsibilities of League there is unlikely to be a desire for any action or any recommendation to the Council. Committee would continue to follow Danzig situation and question of appointment of a High Commissioner would remain entirely open.

5. There are three possible courses. The first, the High Commissioner's return to Danzig, may, quite apart from the question of his functions, provoke a strong and unfavourable reaction in Berlin. On this M. Beck may have views. The second is the High Commissioner's resignation. The third is for the Committee to take no action and to leave matters in their present indefinite state.

6. It is possible that M. Beck may accept idea of High Commissioner's resignation, especially if he expects to negotiate with German Government (your telegram No. 131¹ paragraph 5). But if he presses for return of High Commissioner you should say that, while I cannot speak for Committee of Three, I anticipate that I should find difficulty in securing this unless (1) Polish Government are able to indicate the functions which in their view High Commissioner can now fulfil; and (2) it is understood that if he returns to Danzig he should have no responsibility in respect of maintenance of Constitution. M. Beck will appreciate difficulty of League's position which has in fact been undermined in Danzig largely as result of past Polish policy.

7. I have considered possibility of a visit to Warsaw by High Commissioner before meeting of Council for purpose of ascertaining whether Polish Government have in fact any use for his services. Visit might be open to misconstruction but I should not oppose idea if definite invitation to High Commissioner from Polish Government were forthcoming. I should also see possible advantage in M. Beck encouraging High Commissioner to return by way of Berlin.

8. Please inform M. Beck of our preoccupations as stated above. For your own information, I realize that for many reasons M. Beck will probably think course 3 in paragraph 5 above to be the best. I myself have come to the same conclusion but I think it desirable to elicit M. Beck's views in as clear a form as possible before I go to Geneva.

Repeated to Stockholm, Berlin, Danzig and Paris.

¹ No. 320.

No. 375

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 5, 3.50 p.m.)
No. 194 Telegraphic [R 3677/6/22]

PARIS, May 5, 1939, 2.30 p.m.

I called on Minister for Foreign Affairs this morning to ask whether he could account for disappearance of M. Litvinov, but His Excellency could not throw any light on this.

2. As I went in the Nuncio came out, and M. Bonnet told me that Mgr. Valeri had informed him that the Pope was about to address a public invitation to Great Britain, France, Italy, Germany and Poland to meet together and discuss pending questions in conference.¹

5. M. Bonnet rather threw cold water on this, but gathered from the Nuncio that the Pope's decision was already taken.

Repeated to Holy See.

¹ See also No. 362.

No. 376

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 5, 4.30 p.m.)
No. 195 Telegraphic [R 3675/7/22]

PARIS, May 5, 1939, 2.30 p.m.

Rome telegrams No. 430¹ and No. 431.²

Minister for Foreign Affairs told me this morning that he had received very similar reports from M. Gafencu through French Ambassador at Rome.

2. I said that I earnestly hoped that conversation begun last week between French Ambassador and Count Ciano would be pursued. This seemed all the more desirable owing to present rush of German politicians and soldiers to Italy and German pressure on Italy for a military alliance.

3. M. Bonnet entirely agreed and said that conversations at Rome would be continued.

4. As Your Lordship and Sir P. Loraine are aware, however, resistance to these conversations comes from M. Daladier and even more from M. Léger, who held forth in a most anti-Italian vein to Sir P. Loraine and myself on May 1.³

5. In order to strengthen M. Bonnet's hands I have sent him privately a copy of your despatch to me No. 1071⁴ of May 1.

Repeated to Rome.

¹ No. 369.

² No. 370.

³ See No. 369, note 5.

⁴ No. 328.

No. 377

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 6, 9.30 a.m.)
No. 355 Telegraphic [C 6675/15/18]

BERLIN, May 5, 1939, 8.43 p.m.

Polish Military Attaché saw General Bodenschatz of General [sic] Göring's staff on 3rd instant. General Bodenschatz is an old friend of his.

The General said that there was no hope of restoring General [sic] Göring's health and his political eclipse at the hands of Herr von Ribbentrop was now complete.

He stated that war this year was inevitable and endeavoured to convince Polish Military Attaché that England and France could do nothing to prevent Germany from rapidly over-running Poland. German air force would be employed principally against British shipping.

He added that important results would probably follow the joint German and Italian approaches (? to)¹ Russian Government.

Polish Military Attaché considers that, if Herr Hitler can choose his own time, he will defer precipitating hostilities till the end of June. This is also the opinion held by another well-informed source seen by Military Attaché last night.²

Please inform War Office.

¹ The text is here uncertain.

² A message received at the Foreign Office on May 6, from an emissary of Dr. Goerdeler, former Lord Mayor of Leipzig, stated that Dr. Goerdeler understood that the German Generals had received a new and unexpected offer from the Soviet Union which might entirely change the situation. See also No. 413.

No. 378

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax
(Received May 6, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 189 Telegraphic [C 6688/3356/18]

ANGORA, May 5, 1939, 9.29 p.m.

My telegram No. 184.¹

The Minister for Foreign Affairs gave me an account on May 5 of the conversations during M. Potemkin's visit.

2. They had exchanged information fully as regards their prospective negotiations and each had expressed himself fully satisfied with the correctness and loyalty of the other's Government.

3. M. Potemkin had stated that the Soviet Government applauded Turkish understanding with His Majesty's Government as regards the Mediterranean. As regards the Balkans they equally approved the Turkish attitude though they thought it unduly weak where Roumania was concerned. M. Potemkin emphasised the importance of doing everything possible to solve the Bulgarian and Roumanian difficulty and had promised Soviet support for this.

¹ No. 357.

Soviet Government would use their influence with Bulgaria. Both had agreed as to the need for disposing of this question in order to strengthen the position in the Balkans and make it easier to clarify the position of Yugoslavia.

4. Minister for Foreign Affairs had expressed agreement with Soviet's point of view (1) as regards the possible interpretation of the British guarantee to Poland as applying to attack by Russia and (2) application of the Polish-Roumanian Treaty to all aggressors and not to the Soviet only.

5. M. Potemkin had spoken of the possibility of a three-fold pact (His Majesty's Government, France and the U.S.S.R.). Minister for Foreign Affairs had said he would not like to be approached to join such a pact after . . .² three had concluded it among themselves. He desired that Turkey should figure amongst the original contracting parties with a limited responsibility.

6. M. Potemkin had assured the Minister for Foreign Affairs that Turkey could always count on material aid from the Soviet.

7. He had asked Minister for Foreign Affairs whether the Soviet could rely on Turkey's assistance if they joined Roumania in a war against Germany. Minister for Foreign Affairs had replied this would be impossible unless Turkish Government could be quite sure of the attitude of Bulgaria.

8. He further informed me that Ismet had emphasised to General Weygand³ that the French Government and His Majesty's Government should find a way of bringing the Soviet in and had pointed out the disadvantage of their remaining (? neutral)⁴ throughout a general war. Also that Ismet had insisted with M. Potemkin that the Soviet should accept whatever terms His Majesty's Government and France could offer them, pointing out to him the importance from the Soviet's point of view that they should . . .⁴ amongst partisans and disadvantages which they would suffer if an ultimate settlement were made without them.

See my immediately following telegram.⁵

Repeated to Paris, Moscow, Warsaw, Bucharest, Sofia and Belgrade.

² The text is here uncertain.

³ General Weygand was Commander-in-Chief, French forces in the Levant.

⁴ The text is here uncertain.

⁵ No. 379.

No. 379

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax
(Received May 6, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 190 Telegraphic [C 6689/3356/18]

ANGORA, May 5, 1939, 9.31 p.m.

My immediately preceding telegram.¹

Minister for Foreign Affairs' account of conversations with M. Potemkin surprises me by its deficiency in concrete results.

2. I asked him what was the position as to the proposed Turco-Soviet

¹ No. 378.

agreement (see point 3 in my telegram No. 163²). He said that this was a matter for later realisation. His hope was that Turkey could first make her agreement with His Majesty's Government and French Government and that Soviet Government could then be incorporated. If this proved impossible Franco-Soviet Agreement existed already and might be made use of as a foundation on which to build an agreement with the other three Powers concerned. He described his idea as being one by which a chain could be forged on, the two ends being Turkey and U.S.S.R. and these could be joined when the moment came.

3. He said that he had received a distinct impression from his conversations with M. Potemkin that Soviet Government felt isolated and were suspicious that they were being intentionally kept at arm's length. This feeling even amounted to a considerable degree of distrust.

4. On the other hand he thought the Soviet Government were anxious for closer connexion with the non-aggression Powers. He thought that they would accept proposals of His Majesty's Government largely owing to their fear of isolation but it was important to avoid delay. If His Majesty's Government could offer them 'a little more' all would be well; they would, he was convinced, accept 'a minimum'. If he could be of any service to us as an intermediary he was only too ready to act. Turkey and Russia had just exchanged such expressions of mutual loyalty that he might have some influence.

5. His Excellency dwelt so much on this that I thought it possible that he had definite knowledge of some concession which he knew would turn the scale with the Soviet Government, but I was unable to obtain any more definite statement.

Repeated to Warsaw, Moscow and Paris.

² No. 286.

No. 380

Viscount Halifax to Mr. Osborne (The Vatican)

No. 10 Telegraphic [R 3671/6/22]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 5, 1939, 11.0 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 22.¹

The Apostolic Delegate had already informed me yesterday morning of the Pope's intention.²

2. After consultation with the Prime Minister I saw the Archbishop again this morning and told him that the preliminary reaction of the Prime Minister and of myself was one of warm appreciation of the courage and faith of His Holiness's initiative. I told His Grace that as I understood the Pope's purpose the suggested conference was to afford an opportunity to discuss Danzig and Franco-Italian questions. If this were so, His Majesty's Government were not in a position of principals and I thought that while our

¹ No. 356.

² See No. 362.

reaction was as stated above, it was desirable for the avoidance of misunderstandings that before replying officially to the Vatican we should have some exchange of view with Paris and Warsaw.

3. His Grace, who was unable to say whether simultaneous soundings had been taken by the Vatican in Paris and Warsaw which would thus place us in a position to approach those capitals, promised to take immediate steps to ascertain the answer to this question. His own opinion, however, was that the Vatican would not have moved so far in the matter unless they had in fact already taken soundings in the other quarters concerned. As regards Berlin, he also supposed that the Vatican would not have moved without some reasonably good expectation of the probable reception with which the Pope's initiative would meet in that capital.

4. I was unable to elicit from His Grace what the Pope had in mind as to the place of the conference and who would preside at it and whether it were likely that it should be held in Rome under Vatican auspices.

5. Apart from these specific enquiries I ventured to express to His Grace the hope that if and when the idea of His Holiness took shape regard would be had to the position and possible feelings of President Roosevelt.

6. I added that there would also be many who would regret the omission of Russia from the list of Powers to which His Holiness was making an approach. His Grace replied, as I anticipated, that in no circumstances would it be possible for the Pope to consider such an approach.

7. I finally told the Archbishop frankly that the principal difficulty in the project lay in the possible reaction of those who might detect in it an introduction to what they would fear would be another Munich conference and I trusted that if and when project materialised His Holiness would have particular regard to this danger.

8. You may inform the Under Secretary of State of the above, adding that I should welcome an early elucidation of the question referred to in paragraph 3 above in order that I may be in a better position to give a definite answer to His Holiness's enquiry.

No. 381

*Sir A. Ryan (Durazzo) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 6, 9.30 a.m.)
No. 79 Telegraphic [R 3690/1335/90]*

DURAZZO, May 5, 1939, 11.40 p.m.

Your telegram No. 49.¹

Greek Minister who flew back from Athens yesterday is distinctly less apprehensive of sudden attack on Greece than before he went there. Impressions which he derived from conversations with Prime Minister and others correspond generally with appreciation in your telegram under reference. General staff were nevertheless perturbed by certain features of the situation notably the fact that Italian concentrations are mainly towards

¹ No. 358.

Greek frontier whereas there is nothing of comparable importance in direction of Yugoslav frontier.

2. He stressed anxiety of Greek Government to avoid anything which might provoke Italy. They had sent some reinforcements to both sectors of their frontier with Albania but had not called out any reservists. In the same spirit they had not protested against damage to Greek consulate at Santi Quaranta on April 7 when some 40 Albanians engaged in 'symbolic resistance' to Italian landing took up their position in front of it with natural result that it was hit freely by Italian counter-fire. (I had not previously heard of this.)

3. Greek Minister states that no troops but only material have been landed at Valona and Santi Quaranta for the past week or longer. If correct this tends to support above more optimistic view of the situation especially as there has been no great activity in and around Durazzo since that described in my telegram No. 77.²

Repeated to Athens.

² Not printed. In this telegram of May 3 Sir A. Ryan reported some troop movements from Durazzo to Kavaja.

No. 382

Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)

No. 50 Saving: Telegraphic [C 6444/54/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 5, 1939

Your telegram No. 341.¹

M. Beck said nothing about the German proposals beyond what appears in the record of our conversations.²

Repeated to Warsaw.

¹ No. 331.

² See Nos. 1, 2, 10 and 16.

No. 383

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 8)

No. 169 Saving: Telegraphic [N 2316/64/63]

BERLIN, May 5, 1939

Following statement is published in the press this morning in regard to non-aggression pacts between Germany and Latvia and Estonia:

'On the basis of an exchange of views initiated on earlier occasions between the German and Latvian Governments the Governments of the two countries have now come to an understanding for the conclusion of a non-aggression Pact, the contents of which have already been agreed upon.

'Similar negotiations are proceeding between the German Government and the Government of Estonia in regard to the conclusion of a non-aggression Pact which similarly have already made considerable progress.'

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 6)

No. 261 Saving: Telegraphic [C 6674/54/18]

PARIS, May 5, 1939

The following declaration was made to the press by M. Daladier on the evening of May 4:

'It was announced in the press this morning that when Parliament re-assembles on May 11 the Government will make a declaration in the Chamber on the international situation. I consider that, in present circumstances, I ought not to wait, but say at once what the general sense of this declaration will be.

'The position of France, as I defined it in my broadcast speech of the 29th March (my telegram No. 137¹ of March 30) has not varied and will not vary. Events abroad clearly confirm the legitimacy and the necessity of our policy of vigilance and firmness. This policy has the complete approval of the country, as has again been demonstrated by the deliberations and the resolutions of the Departmental Assemblies (M. Daladier was here referring to the recent biennial² [*sic*] meetings throughout the country of the local Conseils Généraux). Nevertheless it appears that, both in France and abroad, attempts are being made by inaccurate news and tendentious comments to misrepresent the true facts, and to try either to weaken the resolution of the Government and of the nation, or to create abroad uncertainty as to the clarity and integrity of French policy. I cannot protest too strongly against such distortions of the truth.

'In reality, the international situation is such that, diverse and complex as are the principal problems, one single question has in fact to be answered: is there to be domination or collaboration in Europe? It is therefore definitely the security of France which is at stake, and also the future of civilisation which, together with the immense majority of mankind, we are determined to defend.

'The French people knows this. Its resolution is unshakeable. In the present circumstances I merely wish to recall it.'

I hear from M. Bonnet that M. Daladier's declaration was elicited by the articles of Marcel Déat, saying that France would not fight for Danzig, and one or two others, reported in my telegram No. 260 Saving³ of May 4. He wished to make it clear, before the speech of Colonel Beck, that these in no way represented the policy of the Government.

I am informed that on the same evening M. Bonnet spoke in a similar vein to the journalists. He said that it was for Poland to decide freely herself whether, and at what points, her vital interests were affected; and that she could rely, if necessary, on the full support of France and Great Britain.

¹ Not printed.

² These Councils met twice a year (in April and August).

³ No. 360.

M. Daladier's statement is warmly endorsed by the 'Journal des Débats' (Right), by the 'Populaire' (Socialist) and by Bourguès in the semi-official 'Petit Parisien'. In the 'Homme Libre' (M. Bonnet), Henri Dié confirms that France and England would be automatically on the side of Poland if she decided that her independence were threatened, although everyone hoped that the Danzig question would be settled between her and Germany. Déat's article is attacked by the 'Époque' (Right) and Colonel de la Rocque in the 'Petit Journal', Péri in the 'Humanité' (Communist), and the 'Œuvre' (Socialist Radical) in its editorial, also reply to it.

No. 385

Viscount Halifax to Mr. Osborne (The Vatican)

No. 27 [R 3671/6/22]

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 5, 1939

Sir,

I asked the Apostolic Delegate to call on me this morning and told him that I had had an opportunity of speaking last night to the Prime Minister about the Note¹ he had left with me yesterday afternoon. The Prime Minister's reaction to this communication, like my own, had been one of warm appreciation of the courage and faith of His Holiness' initiative.

2. It was clear from the message that His Grace had given to me that the principal purpose in the mind of His Holiness in suggesting the conference was to afford an opportunity for the discussion of Danzig and Franco-Italian questions. It was evident that on this terrain we were not in the position of principals and accordingly I thought, while our own view of the invitation was as I had stated it, it was desirable for the avoidance of misunderstandings that, before intimating our own view formally to the Vatican, we should be able to have some exchange of views with Paris and Warsaw.

3. I accordingly should be grateful to His Grace if he were able to let me know whether simultaneous soundings with those addressed to ourselves were being taken in Paris and Warsaw and whether we were, therefore, at liberty to approach those capitals. The Apostolic Delegate said he would take steps immediately to find out the answer to my question, but his own anticipation would be that the Vatican would not have moved so far in this matter unless they had, in fact, taken steps to sound the position in the other quarters concerned. As regards Berlin, concerning which I asked whether he had any means of anticipating the probable reaction, His Grace stated that he would here also have supposed that the Vatican had not moved without some reasonably good expectation of the probable reception to be accorded to their enquiry.

4. I ventured to express to His Grace the hope that, if and when the idea of His Holiness took shape, regard would be had to the position and possible feelings of President Roosevelt. The Pope would, I had no doubt, have this in mind.

¹ No. 362.

5. I also told His Grace that there would be many people who would regret the omission of Russia from the list of Powers to which His Holiness was making approach. But to this, as I anticipated, His Grace said that he feared in no circumstances would it be possible for the Pope to consider such an approach to Russia.

6. In the course of conversation, I told the Archbishop that the principal difficulty in the proposal of His Holiness would come from those who would detect in it an introduction to what they would fear might be another 'Munich' conference. It might be possible, if His Holiness thought well, to have particular regard to this danger, should the time come to give concrete shape to the proposal now suggested.

7. I asked His Grace whether he had any view as to what might be in the mind of His Holiness concerning the place of the conference, if and when it were held, and who would preside at it. Was it likely to be in the mind of His Holiness that it should be held in Rome under Vatican auspices? To this the Apostolic Delegate replied that he did not think that the Vatican would suggest anything of the kind themselves but might no doubt be willing to consider it if suggested by the parties to the conference.

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

No. 386

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 8)

No. 125 [C 6707/54/18]

WARSAW, May 5, 1939

My Lord,

With reference to my telegram No. 140¹ of today's date, I have the honour to transmit herewith a full translation of the text of the speech made by M. Beck before the Polish Parliament this morning.²

2. As will be seen M. Beck did not add a great deal to what we already know about the proposals and counter-proposals made in the course of the conversations with the German Government.

3. As regards Danzig he emphasised its position on the main waterway and railway line which connects Poland with its Baltic ports and recalled that Poland had purposely not endeavoured to exercise any pressure on the free national, ideological and cultural development of the German majority in the Free City. He also reaffirmed the Polish Government's desire for a reasonable and conciliatory solution.

4. As regards the Corridor, or the Province of Pomorze as Poles prefer to call it, M. Beck said that Poland had suggested the extension to road transport of the existing facilities by which German citizens can travel without any

¹ Not printed. This telegram summarized M. Beck's speech.

² Not printed. The speech is printed as Document No. 77 in the Polish White Book, 'Official Documents concerning German-Polish and Polish-Soviet Relations, 1933-39.' London, 1940.

customs or passport formalities from the Reich to East Prussia. Poland had no reason to obstruct German citizens in their communications with their eastern province. But, on the other hand, there was no ground whatever why she should restrict her sovereignty on her own territory.

5. As regards the 'condominium' in Slovakia mentioned in Herr Hitler's speech, M. Beck stated that certain 'allusions' had been made to the effect that in the event of a general agreement the problem of Slovakia could be discussed, but the suggestion for a triple condominium in Slovakia was heard for the first time in Herr Hitler's speech of the 28th April. M. Beck repudiated any intention of making a bargain at the expense of Slovak interests.

6. M. Beck also denied that the proposal for an extension of the pact of non-aggression to twenty-five years had been put forward in any definite form in any of the recent conversations, although unofficial allusions to such a plan had been made by prominent members of the German Government.

7. Some considerable speculation has been aroused as to what M. Beck meant by saying that 'other hints were made which extended much further than the subject under consideration.' I understand that, in fact, these proposals concerned relations with Russia. Several references have been made to some such proposal—see, for instance, my telegram No. 126³ of the 23rd April.

8. Although I have made confidential enquiries at the competent department of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, I am still not aware just what these proposals amounted to. From what has been said to me, I have no doubt at all that there was, in fact, a German proposal that Poland should associate herself with Germany in an attempt to separate the Soviet Ukraine from the rest of Russia either by military or other means. I think it probable that such a proposal was put forward last autumn when there were indications that such a policy had, at any rate, been considered (see in this connexion my despatch No. 414⁴ of the 14th December, 1938). The proposal may have been repeated by Herr Hitler or Herr von Ribbentrop at Berchtesgaden last January, but I gather that if this was so it was only in a vague form. Some such proposal was certainly made again in the middle of March. If such a proposal was a *sine qua non* of an arrangement involving the return of Danzig and a guarantee of Polish frontiers, it is comprehensible that the Polish Government should have rejected it, for, in my opinion, there would be no greater danger for Poland, with her large Ukrainian population, than the appearance of an independent Ukrainian State on her eastern border, which would almost inevitably be encouraged by Germany. But I am inclined to believe M. Beck when he says that discussions on this and on other subjects never reached the formal stage of any proposals or suggestion being a *sine qua non*, or, indeed, ever being so definitely formulated.

9. It seems to me in any case that M. Beck was wise in not bringing out any scabrous details of this nature at the present juncture.

10. In conclusion I would again emphasise the moderate tone of the speech and the repeated emphasis laid on the willingness of the Polish Government

³ No. 274.

⁴ Not printed.

to enjoy peaceful, good neighbourly relations with the Government of the Reich, provided, however, that they were treated on a footing of equality. This was very much the dominant note of the speech and has also been emphasised by many Poles in commenting thereon in conversation.

11. I am sending a copy of this despatch to His Majesty's Ambassador at Berlin.

I have, &c.,
H. W. KENNARD

No. 387

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax
(Received May 6, 5.30 p.m.)

No. 191 Telegraphic [E 3451/9/44]

ANGORA, May 6, 1939, 12.50 p.m.

My telegram No. 174.¹

Minister for Foreign Affairs' remarks to Herr von Papen have evidently reached Rome for the Minister for Foreign Affairs told me yesterday that the Turkish Ambassador in Rome had had a conversation with Count Ciano in which the latter expressed himself in a most friendly and conciliatory manner. Turkish Ambassador had apparently replied very firmly.

2. Minister for Foreign Affairs has had a further conversation with Herr von Papen in the course of which the German Ambassador said that if only he were given time he would find some means whereby Germany could give effective guarantees to Turkey. As on the previous occasion the Minister for Foreign Affairs was not forthcoming.

3. Minister for Foreign Affairs thinks that German Ambassador is distinctly taken aback by change between present-day Turkey and the Turkey which he knew previously.²

¹ No. 302.

² Herr von Papen had been attached for a time to the Turkish Army as a staff officer during the 1914-18 war.

No. 388

Sir P. Loraine (Rome) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 6, 3.30 p.m.)

No. 436 Telegraphic [C 6691/54/18]

ROME, May 6, 1939, 2.10 p.m.

I was able to see Count Ciano yesterday evening before he departs for Milan to meet Herr von Ribbentrop and I asked him what his view was about the danger resulting from the difficulty between Germany and Poland. He replied he had not yet had time to consider fully the text of M. Beck's speech and that 24 hours later and after seeing Herr von Ribbentrop he would doubtless have better information on which to base an opinion but he was not unhopeful of a peaceful solution if the Polish attitude were a reasonable one.

He referred me to Signor Gayda's article yesterday evening in the 'Giornale d'Italia' (see my telegram No. 155 Saving¹ by bag) which he said on this particular occasion did reflect pretty accurately the attitude of the Italian Government.

2. I asked His Excellency whether I was right in believing that the Italian Government's desire that the German-Polish difficulty should not lead to violence was as strong as that of His Majesty's Government. He confirmed this view in regard to Italy since they wished for peace. Peace and *serenity*? I queried. Yes, he replied, we Italians especially, after all the fighting we have been through.

Repeated to Berlin, Paris and Warsaw.

¹ Not printed.

No. 389

Viscount Halifax to Sir W. Seeds (Moscow)

No. 98 Telegraphic [C 6705/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 6, 1939, 7.30 p.m.

1. My immediately following telegram¹ furnishes you with instructions as to the reply to be given to the Soviet Government concerning their proposals reported in your telegram No. 69.²

2. Before acting on it, you should enquire of Commissar for Foreign Affairs whether the recent change of personnel implies any change of outlook on the part of the Soviet Government and whether, in fact, those proposals still stand.

3. If you are satisfied that they do, and that there is no change in the outlook, you may proceed to act as instructed in my immediately following telegram.

4. If he admits that the situation has changed, or you feel doubts as to present policy of the Soviet, you should suspend action and inform me by telegraph.

5. In regard to the communication authorised in my immediately following telegram, I would give the following explanations for your own information and guidance.

6. His Majesty's Government fully realise the force of the considerations which led the Soviet Government to formulate Point 6 of their proposals.

7. In order to try to meet the Soviet Government to some extent we have inserted towards the end of our proposed formula the words 'and on such terms.' It would then be possible to deal with this matter if and when the event arises.

8. His Majesty's Government would hope that it might be possible for you to persuade Soviet Government not to press this point, which is one of obvious difficulty. Should it however appear that the point was one likely to exert decisive influence on Soviet decision as to unilateral declaration proposed,

¹ No. 397.

² No. 201.

His Majesty's Government would wish that, while leaving them complete freedom for further examination of issues raised, you should do your best so to handle matter as to prevent negotiation breaking down finally on this or indeed any other ground.

9. Should you find it necessary, you could speak to M. Molotov on line that if the Soviet Government were prepared to give favourable consideration to the suggestion that they should make a declaration of the kind outlined above, His Majesty's Government would be very willing to discuss with the Soviet Government any further questions which might arise therefrom.³

Repeated to Paris, Warsaw, Berlin, Bucharest and Angora.

³ A copy of the instructions contained in this telegram and in No. 397 was given by Sir E. Phipps to the French Government on May 7.

No. 390

Sir S. Waterlow (Athens) to Viscount Halifax
(Received May 6, 8.20 p.m.)

No. 185 Telegraphic [R 3717/1335/90]

ATHENS, May 6, 1939, 8.0 p.m.

Your telegram No. 166.¹

When returning formal call of the new Italian Minister yesterday I referred to anxiety of the Greek Government in regard to Italian troop concentrations in Albania. He replied that in view of formal assurances given by the Duce, he could not understand Greek Government's fears which he could assure me were entirely unfounded.

I learn from Minister for Foreign Affairs today that the Prime Minister sent for the Italian Minister this morning and informed him that the deepest (? anxiety)² was being caused amongst Greek population in frontier district owing to the reports of considerable concentrations of Italian troops on the Albanian frontier. The Italian Minister replied that he was authorised to give the most complete assurances in regard to Italy's intentions towards Greece. He would however communicate the Prime Minister's remarks to his Government.

Repeated to Rome and Durazzo.

¹ No. 358 was repeated to Athens as telegram No. 166.

² The text is here uncertain.

No. 391

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax
(Received May 7, 10.0 a.m.)

No. 192 Telegraphic [R 3684/661/67]

ANGORA, May 6, 1939, 9.0 p.m.

Your telegram No. 144¹ paragraph 2 and your telegram No. 145.²

On May 6 Minister for Foreign Affairs informed me that the Turkish

¹ No. 310.

² No. 311.

Government with the consent of the Parliamentary group of the Popular Party agrees to the Declaration proposed by you with certain minor amendments.

My immediately following telegram³ gives French text with amendments desired by the Turkish Government. . . .⁴ are underlined.

2. Minister for Foreign Affairs explained that policy stated in Turkish Declaration still required formal Parliamentary consent. He desires to bring the Declaration as amended before a meeting of the National Assembly next week. He asked me to inform you of this and enquires on what day you should propose to make the same statement before Parliament. He is anxious that statements in the two Parliaments should synchronise. After passing National Assembly the text of Declaration would be released to the local news agency.

3. Meetings of the Assembly take place Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

4. It is a foregone conclusion that the Declaration will be passed by the Assembly and Minister for Foreign Affairs will not be at the discussions with the Parliamentary groups; they admitted the four independent members⁵ in order to indicate the national importance which they attach to the Declaration.

5. See my telegram No. 195.⁶

Repeated to Paris, Athens, Belgrade, Bucharest and Sofia.

³ No. 393.

⁴ The text is here uncertain.

⁵ i.e. the four members of the Turkish National Assembly who represented minorities and were not members of the Republican People's Party.

⁶ No. 394.

No. 392

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax
(Received May 7, 10.0 a.m.)

No. 194 Telegraphic [R 3686/661/67]

ANGORA, May 6, 1939, 9.5 p.m.

My telegram No. 193.¹

Following are explanations of Turkish amendments.

(a) Objection to word 'permanent' is that it implies no time limit whatever.

(b) Their reason for desiring 'aid and assistance' is to make certain that all form[s] of assistance, military, material and financial, are covered. Use of the two substantives is of course unnecessary but it appears to clear their minds and gives them satisfaction.

(c) By 'définitif' I think they mean final agreement as distinct from interim understanding in paragraph 9 of your telegram No. 144.²

Repeated to Paris, Sofia, Bucharest, Belgrade and Athens.

¹ No. 393.

² No. 310.

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax
(Received May 7, 10.0 a.m.)

No. 193 *Telegraphic* [R 3685/661/67]

ANGORA, May 6, 1939, 10.0 p.m.

My immediately preceding telegram.¹

Following is text referred to in my immediately preceding telegram.

Explanations in my immediately following telegram.²

Le Gouvernement de Sa Majesté dans le Royaume-Uni et le Gouvernement Turc sont entrés en étroites consultations, et les discussions dans lesquelles ils se sont engagés et qui sont encore en cours, ont révélé l'identité de vue habituelle.

Il est convenu que les deux états concluront un accord définitif *de longue durée comportant des engagements réciproques dans l'intérêt de leur sécurité nationale.*

En attendant la conclusion *de l'accord définitif*, le Gouvernement de Sa Majesté et le Gouvernement Turc déclarent que dans le cas d'un acte d'agression³ dans la région Méditerranéenne, ils seraient prêts à *coopérer effectivement* et à s'accorder mutuellement toute *aide et assistance* en leur pouvoir.

Cette déclaration, aussi bien que l'accord envisagé (? ici)⁴ *n'est dirigée* contre aucun pays, mais a pour but d'assurer à la Grande-Bretagne et à la Turquie *une aide et assistance* réciproque dans le cas où celle-ci s'avérerait nécessaire.

Il est reconnu par les deux Gouvernements que certaines questions, y comprise la définition plus précise des diverses conditions dans lesquelles *se déclencherait le jeu des engagements réciproques*, demanderont un examen plus approfondi avant que l'accord *définitif* puisse être complété. Cet examen est actuellement en cours.

Il est entendu que les dispositions ci-dessus énoncées n'empêchent ni l'un ni l'autre Gouvernement de conclure dans l'intérêt général de la consolidation de la paix des accords avec d'autres pays.

Repeated to Paris, Athens, Bucharest, Belgrade and Sofia.

¹ No. 391.

² No. 392. These telegrams were despatched in reverse order.

³ The words 'qui conduirait à une guerre' were accidentally omitted at this point. See No. 443.

⁴ The text is here uncertain. This should read: 'l'accord envisagé, n'est dirigée contre . . .'. See No. 443.

No. 394

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax
(Received May 7, 10.0 a.m.)

No. 195 Telegraphic [R 3687/661/67]

ANGORA, May 6, 1939, 10.7 p.m.

My telegrams Nos. 192¹ and 193.²

I mentioned to Minister for Foreign Affairs point raised in your telegram No. 144³ regarding absence of reference to Balkans. I said Prime Minister was certain to be questioned in the House of Commons as to reason for this omission. Minister for Foreign Affairs explained reason for not referring to Balkans was that matter was still under discussion between us. (He intends to give me full answer of Turkish Government to other points raised in your telegram some time next week but said that on broad lines Turkish answer would be in the affirmative.)

2. Minister for Foreign Affairs agreed that in the event of question being asked answer could be given on following lines.

3. Turkey's obligations in the Balkans are already covered by Balkan Pact. As regards British obligations His Majesty's Government have already given guarantees to Greece and Roumania. Question of Balkans is, however, continuing to form the subject of consultations between the Turkish Government and His Majesty's Government and these conversations are proceeding in accordance with customary identity of views mentioned in paragraph 1 of declaration.

Repeated to Paris, Sofia, Bucharest, Belgrade and Athens.

¹ No. 391.

² No. 393.

³ No. 310.

No. 395

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax
(Received May 7, 10.0 a.m.)

No. 197 Telegraphic [R 2689/661/67]

ANGORA, May 6, 1939, 10.10 p.m.

My telegram No. 192.¹

I feel that you should know, since meeting of the Popular party yesterday, Angora is full of rumours that Turkey has concluded a close alliance with us and is in with us up to the hilt.

2. For this reason the sooner declaration can be made the better.

3. Minister for Foreign Affairs has informed the Yugoslav Minister and is I presume similarly informing Greek and Roumanian representatives.

Repeated to Paris.

¹ No. 391.

No. 396

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax
(Received May 7, 10.0 a.m.)

No. 196 Telegraphic [R 3688/661/67]

ANGORA, May 6, 1939, 10.15 p.m.

My telegrams Nos. 192,¹ 193² and 194.³

I have informed my French colleague. He tells me he has received instructions from Paris emphasizing the desire of French Government that declaration should be tripartite and include the French Government. He has seen Minister for Foreign Affairs who entirely agrees. I have given him the text as in my telegram No. 193 and he is sending it to Paris.

Repeated to Paris, Bucharest and Athens.

¹ No. 391.

² No. 393.

³ No. 392.

No. 397

Viscount Halifax to Sir W. Seeds (Moscow)

No. 99 Telegraphic [C 6705/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 6, 1939, 11.30 p.m.

Your telegram No. 69¹ and my immediately preceding telegram.²

1. His Majesty's Government have given careful and sympathetic consideration to the counter-proposal of the Soviet Government communicated in your telegram under reference. They much appreciate the readiness which the Soviet Government have shown in making their contribution towards the object which both Governments have in view. His Majesty's Government regret that they have not been able to return their comments on the Soviet plan at an earlier date. But such delay as has occurred has been unavoidable not only because they have felt it right themselves to examine the Soviet plan with all the care that so important a proposal deserves, but also because they have been in duty bound to communicate with other interested Governments before reaching their own conclusions.

2. I have already instructed you in my telegram No. 94³ to clear up a misunderstanding which had apparently arisen as to the intention underlying the proposal made by His Majesty's Government to the Soviet Government on April 14.⁴ I would take this opportunity of repeating that when His Majesty's Government made their proposal to the Soviet Government it was no part of their intention that the Soviet Government should commit themselves to intervene on behalf of Poland and Roumania irrespective of whether Great Britain and France had already intervened. If the Soviet Government wished to make their own intervention contingent on that of Great Britain

¹ No. 201.

² No. 389.

³ No. 312.

⁴ See No. 170.

and France, His Majesty's Government for their part would have no objection.

3. Furthermore, His Majesty's Government would point out that in the formula suggested by them to the Soviet Government on April 14 the reason for confining Soviet assistance to cases in which assistance was desired, and to forms which would be acceptable to the Governments concerned, are to be found in the attitude of the Governments to which assistance would be rendered, rather than that of His Majesty's Government themselves. Our object is to arrange early help and protection for Poland and Roumania as the countries most immediately threatened, in the form best calculated to act as an effective deterrent to any aggression upon them. It seemed to His Majesty's Government that the formula which we suggested to the Soviet Government taken together with the assurances already given to Poland and Roumania by Great Britain and France would be the best way of securing this, though in effect we were asking the Soviet Government to commit themselves less completely than we were committed ourselves, in that they were only invited to pledge themselves to give assistance if desired, and *ex hypothesi* only to intervene when France and Great Britain do so.

4. Our main criticism of the new proposal now made by the Soviet Government is that, though logically complete, it takes too little account of practical difficulties and would require too long a time for its negotiation. Under Point 2 of the Soviet proposals the Soviet Union would be bound automatically to render military assistance to Poland and Roumania in case of aggression against those States. We know the difficulties that this presents to the Polish and Roumanian Governments. The same difficulty exists indirectly in connexion with Point 1. A promise by the Soviet Government of automatic assistance to His Majesty's Government in cases where the latter are involved in war in discharge of commitments in favour of Poland and Roumania would seem inevitably to involve Polish and Roumanian Governments in the same position as that which they find so embarrassing in the case of direct assistance.

5. In the arrangements which we have in mind the key positions are occupied by Poland and Turkey. In the case of Turkey, no difficulty arises so far as the Soviet Union is concerned. The Turkish Government are very willing to be closely associated with the Soviet Government in any defensive arrangement that may be reached. With Poland, however, as has already been pointed out, the case is different. The hesitation of the Polish Government to be too closely associated with the Soviet Union in political arrangements is well known to the Soviet Government. This hesitation may well be held to be unjustified, but it undoubtedly exists and must be taken into account. Rightly or wrongly, the Polish Government are convinced that if they were to enter into any public association with the Soviet Union, this would be regarded by the German Government as an unnecessary provocation and would involve grave risk of war which ought to be avoided. The same considerations apply in the case of the Roumanian Government.

6. For these reasons we believe the time is not yet ripe for the comprehensive counter-proposal which the Soviet Government have made to us. His Majesty's Government are still disposed to feel that the better plan is to start from what is immediately practicable and to build upon that basis. The primary task must be to erect the first essential barrier against aggression in Eastern Europe by making arrangements for the safety of those States most directly menaced. In this task His Majesty's Government would always attach great importance to the association with their efforts of the Soviet Government. They are in fact fully conscious that the support that might be afforded by the Soviet Government to Eastern European countries would be of the utmost value in case of war, and that the prospect of such support would act as a powerful deterrent against aggression. Their whole effort has accordingly been directed to finding means by which the difficulties alluded to above may be avoided or overcome. It was with this purpose that His Majesty's Government proposed that the Soviet Government should of their own volition make a declaration which they are convinced would steady the situation by showing the willingness of the Soviet Government to collaborate and which at the same time would not disturb the possible beneficiaries of Soviet assistance. By this proposal the Soviet Government would lend their assistance, in whatever form seemed most desirable, to States victims of aggression and themselves determined to resist, who wished to take advantage of it. The original proposal made to the Soviet Government was designed for the purpose of giving effect to this idea.

7. His Majesty's Government have, however, in the light of the Soviet counter-proposal and of their consultations with other Governments, revised the proposal which they originally made to the Soviet Government, and they would now submit it in the following form:

'It is suggested that the Soviet Government should make a public declaration on their own initiative in which, after referring to the general statement of policy recently made by M. Stalin, and having regard to statements recently made by His Majesty's Government and the French Government accepting new obligations on behalf of certain Eastern European countries, the Soviet Government would undertake that in the event of Great Britain and France being involved in hostilities in fulfilment of these obligations, the assistance of the Soviet Government would be immediately available, if desired, and would be afforded in such manner and on such terms as might be agreed'.

8. You will observe that this formula does, in fact, give the Soviet Government a reciprocal assurance of common action, since the declaration which we would suggest to be made by them only places them under a conditional obligation, in a case where *ex hypothesi* Great Britain and France are already engaged.

9. You should speak to Commissar for Foreign Affairs on the foregoing lines.

Repeated to Paris, Warsaw, Berlin, Bucharest and Angora.

No. 398

Viscount Halifax to Sir P. Loraine (Rome)

No. 235 Telegraphic [N 2263/233/38]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 6, 1939, 11.45 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 433.¹

I have no information on actual cause of resignation, though there has been reason to believe for some months past that M. Litvinov's position was not secure.

Resignation at this juncture was possibly connected in some way with anti-aggression discussions. One possibility is that M. Stalin is disgruntled at failure of His Majesty's Government and French Government to respond adequately to Soviet overtures and is moving towards policy of isolation. Another theory is that he is dissatisfied, not with M. Litvinov's whole policy, but with his attempts to conclude general pacts, and will now favour specific *ad hoc* commitments. This, however, seems less likely.

That M. Stalin contemplates arrangement with Germany is not obvious; but he may think isolation and complete neutrality (which would favour Germany in practice) preferable to association with Western Powers if they will not guarantee Soviet Union against German attack.

But all this is pure conjecture.

¹ No. 372.

No. 399

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris) and Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw)

No. 172 Saving:¹ Telegraphic [R 3682/6/22]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 6, 1939*

1. I understand that the French (Polish) Government have already received from the Vatican a suggestion that has been made to His Majesty's Government through the Apostolic Delegate here,² for a Five-Power Conference to deal principally with the questions of Danzig and Franco-Italian differences.

2. As the French (Polish) Government are more directly interested than are His Majesty's Government in this proposal, I should be very glad to learn their views before His Majesty's Government formulate their reply to the Vatican. The French (Polish) Government will no doubt, like His Majesty's Government, be impressed with the motives that have prompted His Holiness to contemplate this initiative, but I imagine they will, like ourselves, appreciate difficulties which it is likely to encounter.

¹ No. 172 Saving to Paris, No. 146 to Warsaw.

² See No. 362.

3. In conversation with the Apostolic Delegate³ I have referred to the two principal difficulties that would be found to stand in the way of the Pope's suggestion, namely, (1) Hitler's aversion from conferences, and (2) the fact that the French Government might well be reluctant to allow German participation in discussion of their differences with Italy. As the Pope seems to have the Danzig question and Franco-Italian differences chiefly in mind, I enquired of the Apostolic Delegate whether an alternative plan might be possible whereby the Pope, if he would agree to do so, might offer his good offices to assist German-Polish negotiations on the former question and Franco-Italian discussions of the latter. I only put this tentatively and as a personal suggestion to the Apostolic Delegate, but he said that he would pass it on to the Vatican.

4. I should be very glad to learn whether the French (Polish) Government think that anything could be made of this suggestion, if indeed the Pope were willing to adopt it.

Repeated to Vatican and Berlin.

³ Lord Halifax spoke in this sense to the Apostolic Delegate on May 6.

No. 400

Minute by Sir A. Cadogan

[R 3784/661/67]

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 6, 1939

The French Ambassador yesterday evening enquired of me how our negotiations with the Turkish Government were proceeding. I outlined to him the latest proposals and suggestions for procedure which we had put before the Turkish Government, but said that so far as I was aware we had not yet received their considered reply.¹

M. Corbin enquired whether there was anything to indicate that the Turkish Government's attitude would be dependent on the result of our negotiations with the Soviet Government. I said that the Turkish Government were evincing considerable interest in our negotiations with the Soviet Government and perhaps it might be inferred that they were hesitating to commit themselves very definitely before they knew the result of our negotiations.

M. Corbin said that General Weygand, who had recently been in Angora, had had very satisfactory conversations with General Ismet Inonu who had given him the fullest and most complete assurances of solidarity. Incidentally, it was interesting that General Ismet had insisted on the necessity of Russian participation in hostilities on the ground that it would be disastrous if the Russian Army alone were left intact at the end of a European war.

A. C.

¹ The Turkish reply contained in No. 393 was not received until 10.0 a.m. on May 7.

*Viscount Halifax to Sir W. Seeds (Moscow)**No. 342 [C 6705/3356/18]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 6, 1939

Sir,

I asked the Soviet Ambassador to call on me this morning. I told His Excellency, as I had informed him last week,¹ that we had been in consultation with other Governments concerned as to the proposals received from the Soviet Government, and that we were now, so far as these consultations were concerned, almost ready to submit our reply to the Soviet Government.² We had in deference to the views expressed by the Soviet Government somewhat modified our own suggestions and the formula that we had put forward, though I must tell him that on the main line we were still disposed to feel that our method of procedure seemed to us the best.

2. Before communicating, however, with his Government, I should like to ask him, if he felt able to tell me, whether the recent changes in personnel in Moscow should be held to signify any change in policy. Should we assume that the Russian proposals still held the field?

3. M. Maisky at once replied that no change of policy was to be assumed from the recent departure of M. Litvinov, and that accordingly the Russian proposals did still hold the field. I said that I was glad to hear this, and that, in the light of this knowledge, I hoped we should be able to make our communication to Moscow in the course of the next day or two. The Ambassador asked me whether I could give him any indication of what were the modifications that we had introduced. I said that I thought our reply would take the form of a somewhat detailed examination of the proposals actually made by the Soviet Government, and that, in particular, it would make plain what had not been plain in the earlier suggestion, i.e., that we were not inviting the Soviet Government to accept any commitment except in conditions under which this country and France would themselves be actively engaged in hostilities. In the course of discussion, in which the Ambassador developed familiar arguments in support of the Russian plan, I told His Excellency that what I conceived to be the real difference between us was that the Russian plan, in fact, amounted to a Triple Alliance between Great Britain, France and Russia. For that from our point of view there was no doubt a great deal to be said, but it did seem to us very clearly to involve this consequence. Inasmuch as in the circumstances which we had in contemplation we should be involved in hostilities on behalf of Poland or Roumania, the Russian plan did automatically involve, through the terms of the hypothetical alliance, Soviet support for Poland and Roumania, and this was exactly what all our information led us to believe would cause great embarrassment to those countries, and in their view might very well provoke the very thing we all wished to avert. The difference between us was really one of form, though admittedly

¹ See No. 316.² This interview took place before the despatch of No. 397.

the difference of form was of great importance, and the practical result of the plan we suggested would, in fact, be the same as that desired by the Soviet Government, with only this difference that our plan did not carry the great disadvantages of causing immediate difficulties to those whom we both desired to help. I begged the Ambassador, even if he could not bring himself to think that we were right in preference for our own proposals, to assure his Government that they were put forward in all good faith and sincerely designed to effect the purpose of providing deterrents to aggression which we, not less than the Soviet Government, desired to do. With this the Ambassador readily concurred, while still expressing regret that we felt difficulty about accepting what seemed to him the more logical, the more complete and the more effective Russian plan.

4. The Ambassador then asked me what information, if any, we had in regard to Danzig. I told him that I had not as yet any information as to the reactions in Berlin to M. Beck's speech.³ The speech itself had impressed me favourably as being at once firm, non-provocative and leaving the doors open. M. Maisky agreed with this general judgment, but emphasised the extreme importance of nothing being said in England to suggest that we were not in earnest in promising to support Poland. One or two sentences in recent articles in 'The Times' had struck him as unfortunate. M. Maisky asked me whether I had any reason to suppose that the meeting between Count Ciano and Herr von Ribbentrop⁴ was in order that the two Powers might sign a military alliance. I told him that I had no information in this sense.

I am, &c.,

HALIFAX

³ See No. 386.

⁴ See No. 409.

No. 402

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 8)

No. 126 [C 6713/54/18]

WARSAW, May 6, 1939

My Lord,

With reference to my telegram No. 141,¹ I have the honour to transmit herewith a translation of the Polish memorandum² communicated to the German Government yesterday in reply to their memorandum of April 28.³ The text of the memorandum has today been published in the press.

2. As was mentioned in my telegram under reference, the enclosed memorandum is more juridical and also slightly sharper in tone than M. Beck's speech yesterday. Thus in the penultimate paragraph of Section 2 of the memorandum the Polish Government state that negotiations in which

¹ Not printed. This telegram of May 5 briefly summarized the Polish memorandum.

² Not printed. The memorandum is printed as document No. 78 in the Polish White Book, 'Official Documents concerning Polish-German and Polish-Soviet Relations, 1933-9'. London, 1940.

³ See No. 309, note 1.

one State formulates demands which the other is expected to accept unaltered, are not negotiations in the spirit of the Polish-German Declaration of 1934 and are incompatible with the vital interests and dignity of Poland; and the memorandum also rebuts firmly in Sections 3 and 4 the German contention that the Polish-British understanding has violated the 1934 Declaration. The memorandum however restates clearly Poland's desire for good neighbourly relations provided she is treated on a footing of equality.

3. I am sending a copy of this despatch to His Majesty's Ambassador at Berlin.

I have, &c.,
H. W. KENNARD

No. 403

Letter from Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
[C 7096/54/18]

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, May 6, 1939

Dear Secretary of State,

One point in Beck's speech was interesting where, in connection with the 25 years' guarantee, he said that there were in the conversations with Germany 'also various other allusions reaching far wider and further than the subjects now under consideration' and where he added 'I reserve the right to return to this matter, if necessary.'

Presumably Hitler or Ribbentrop at Berchtesgaden proposed various nefarious schemes about Lithuania and the Ukraine and Beck's remark was intended as a threat to divulge them. Probably Beck himself at least toyed with these ideas, otherwise he would have been even readier to disclose them.

The danger of the present situation seems to me a double one. Firstly, Hitler has publicly announced to the world his offer to Poland. Can he possibly accept anything less, particularly when he has his own people solidly behind him? In fact they regard the offer in itself as generous to the point of exaggeration. The Germans as a nation do not want a world war but, long before Hitler, the Corridor was in their eyes the most unjust and insupportable of the Versailles Peace terms. I greatly doubt therefore if anything less will ever permanently satisfy them, and even if Hitler were to decide that his chances in war are not now favourable enough and the risks too great, I fear that this must merely be regarded as a case of marking time—till circumstances one day do make the chances favourable enough.

Admittedly the corridor-over-the-Corridor scheme in itself might or would never have meant more than marking time either. Probably not, though it is too much to say certainly not. Yet, faint though it might have been, the chance was a possibility. I must confess that when Göring used to mention to me the solution of a corridor over the Corridor, I never even discussed it because I thought it too good to be true. Probably it *was* too good to be true and Hitler never meant the Poles to accept. It is in fact my

sad inner conviction that the chauvinism of the Poles has made Beck overplay Poland's hand. He may scoff at a 25 years' guarantee but at least a guarantee is better than none at all, since its eventual breach would again have put Germany publicly wrong in the world's eyes, just as his breach of the Munich Agreement has now done. And world opinion is no small asset.

The second cause for apprehension is the increasingly unsound economic condition of Germany. Can she get through another winter without a crash? And, if not, will not Hitler prefer the chances of war to economic disaster and unpopularity? Certainly I am convinced that, together with the blockade fears, economics was a big factor in the final decision to seize Bohemia and Moravia. The same factors will be in play as regards Posen and Upper Silesia, which would be Germany's war aims in any conflict with Poland.

It may be a hand-to-mouth policy, for I fancy that Austria or Bohemia—so far as the provision of the raw materials which Germany wants is concerned—are [*sic*] for the time being more of a handicap than an asset. They are however unfortunately assets in the other ways which appeal to the Party leaders, Ribbentrop and Co.

The question in fact is how much longer can Germany go on devoting sixty or more per cent. of the sum of her efforts on human beings, labour and materials, &c., destined solely for destructive purposes. I am not sufficiently an economist to venture on any opinion on the subject, yet I feel that, without the temporary relief of a war, the test is soon going to be a pretty severe one with the dreaded repetition of inflation looming in the background.

One thus comes to the conclusion that there is little hope either way for peace unless fate steps in and somehow contrives the downfall of Hitler and his gangsters. Failing the hand of Providence, I do not believe that this can be done by any means short of war with all its ghastly implications. If so, possibly better now than later. On the other hand will it not be a tragic mistake for us to fight the German nation again—if it can possibly be avoided? Once is an experience but twice is vice. A repetition of 1914–1918 would, at the best so far as we are concerned, leave behind it a heritage of ill-will and bitter resentment and the longing for revenge. And can we go on always hoping for the best? I realise that the answer to this may well be, better now than in ten years time when Germany will probably be far more formidable than she is today.

I do not envy His Majesty's Government, and especially the Prime Minister and yourself, your vast responsibilities. The Pope may serve a purpose; even so, I do not believe that there is an exit from the present deadlock unless he has Mussolini behind him. It seems consequently all the more tragic to read from a telegram of Phipps¹ that Daladier refuses to give Mussolini the great credit which he undoubtedly deserved for his immediate and decisive response to our appeal last September. It is typical of French mentality towards Italy generally. Though I would never try to get Italy out of the Axis, of which she is in fact a brake in peace time and might well be the weakness in war-time (moreover it would merely mean adding the South

¹ See No. 255.

Tyrol and Trieste to our other difficulties), I would move Heaven and Earth, or at least Paris, to go to the limit to satisfy Mussolini and to make war on behalf of Germany still more unpopular in Italy. If necessary I would even offer to compensate France in British Somaliland for the concessions which she might make to Italy as regards Djibuti.

And I would do it quickly for we have not the initiative in East Europe. That lies with Hitler or the Poles. Either might provoke the incident which would lead us again to the abyss of war. It seems to me that it would be so easy, for example, for Danzig to vote itself constitutionally into the Reich. What would the Poles do then? Presumably it is a League of Nations matter. Yet what would happen if the Poles started to shoot up the Danzigers? And if they did or did not, would not Germany then march or sail in? That is why it might be best to try to settle the Danzig question anyway at once and separately, leaving the Corridor problem for a later date. Our weakest case is in respect of Danzig.

NEVILLE HENDERSON

CHAPTER VI

The European situation: Polish–German relations: further correspondence with the Soviet Govern- ment: Anglo-Turkish declaration of May 12. (May 7–12, 1939.)

No. 404

Mr. Osborne (The Vatican) to Viscount Halifax
(Received May 7, 10.0 a.m.)
No. 23 Telegraphic [R 3737/6/22]

THE VATICAN, May 7, 1939, 1.45 a.m.

Your telegram No. 10.¹

I have spoken to the Under-Secretary of State. There is no objection to an exchange of views with French and Polish Governments, both of which have been approached. The Pope has no ideas or suggestions as to the place or methods of consultation and there is no question of a meeting in the Vatican City or of participation of any representatives of the Vatican; His Holiness is only concerned to urge the parties addressed to meet and endeavour to reach a friendly solution of the questions threatening peace. A copy of the message, if and when sent, will be communicated to President Roosevelt. As regards danger of apparent analogy with the Munich Conference, Under-Secretary of State will draw the Pope's attention to this point but observed that the outcome of any meeting must depend on those attending it and he did not see what the Pope could do to meet this possible objection.

The Under-Secretary of State told me that replies received had all expressed appreciation of His Holiness' proposed initiative but had all reserved official approval. Herr Hitler had said he wished to consult Signor Mussolini before replying; Signor Mussolini said that he would like the question of Franco-Italian difficulties not to be mentioned in the message since they were capable of bilateral solution and did not present immediate danger of war like the matters at issue between Germany and Poland; (? the French)² that, though altogether commendable, proposed message might perhaps be reserved for later and more dangerous occasion. No answer at all had yet been received from Warsaw.

His Excellency added that the Pope, although a little disappointed by these temporizing replies, was not shaken in his intention to proceed with his initiative. However no date of issue of the message had in the circumstances been fixed.

¹ No. 380.

² The text is here uncertain.

If you have any helpful suggestions to offer there is still time to present them and I am sure they would be given due consideration.

No. 405

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)

No. 193 Telegraphic [R 3325/661/67]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 7, 1939, 6.0 p.m.*

Angora telegram No. 163¹ and my telegrams Nos. 144² and 145³ to Angora.

I should be grateful if you would keep the French Government informed in general terms of the present stage in our exchange of views with the Turkish Government as revealed by the two telegrams under reference.

2. While the possibility of an early Declaration on the part of His Majesty's Government and the Turkish Government relating to the Mediterranean only is still under discussion, I am inclined to think that if the Turkish Government see grave objections to it, it would, for the reasons given at the end of paragraph 2 of my telegram to Angora No. 144, perhaps be unwise to press it. The question therefore of mutual collaboration between His Majesty's Government and Turkey in the event of war breaking out in the Mediterranean would then have to be covered by the interim understanding. Whether or not this understanding would be made public must depend largely on the circumstances obtaining internationally and internally (i.e. Parliamentary considerations) at the moment when that understanding is reached.

3. The problem of the manner in which France can be associated with either the Declaration (if it is made), the interim understanding or the eventual treaty is bound to arise sooner or later.

4. As regards the Declaration, as it would be bilateral in form and makes specific mention of the future negotiation of a treaty between the United Kingdom and Turkey, it would probably suffice if the French and Turkish Governments could arrange for a simultaneous declaration to be made by them on similar lines to my telegram No. 145 to Angora with such changes as may be appropriate.

5. As regards the interim understanding, I think it should suffice if, once an agreed text were reached between His Majesty's Government and the Turkish Government, the two Governments communicated it to the French Government who would then, if they saw fit, conclude a similar arrangement with the Turkish Government.

6. The question of an ultimate treaty between France and Turkey is one which those two Governments will doubtless consider in due course. I am only concerned at the present stage to let it be known to the French Government that His Majesty's Government, as at present advised, prefer the idea of bilateral treaties with Turkey rather than a single tripartite instrument. Bilateral instruments are easier to negotiate and can take greater account of

¹ No. 286.

² No. 310.

³ No. 311.

the individual requirements, strategical and political, of the participants and do not give as formidable an impression of encirclement.⁴

Repeated to Angora.

⁴ On May 8 Sir E. Phipps communicated to the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs an *aide-mémoire* summarizing this telegram and telegrams Nos. 144 and 145 to Angora (Nos. 310 and 311).

No. 406

Sir W. Seeds (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 7, 7.30 p.m.)
No. 84 Telegraphic [N 2318/233/38]

MOSCOW, May 7, 1939, 6.0 p.m.

My telegram No. 83.¹

Short formal letter received yesterday from M. Molotov notified his new appointment.

2. Tass communiqué regarding M. Potemkin's visit to Angora (see my immediately following telegram²) specified that official's rank, and shows he is being maintained in his position of First Deputy of People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs.

3. Press still refrains from any comments on British and French policy, but I seem to notice an absence of direct Press attacks on Germany and Italy.

4. This may well be accounted [for] by lack of a lead from Commissariat of Foreign Affairs where there is probably a certain amount of confusion.

5. On the other hand some of my foreign colleagues are inclined to view M. Litvinov's disappearance as a blow to Western Powers. There are rumours that a new German Ambassador (von Hammerstein) is to be appointed here. The present holder of the post³ is absent in Iran whither he went for marriage festivities.⁴

Repeated to Berlin.

¹ No. 359.

² Not printed. This telegram gave the text of the Tass communiqué referred to above.

³ Count von der Schulenburg.

⁴ The Crown Prince of Iran had recently married Princess Fawzia of Egypt. Count von der Schulenburg headed the German delegation to Iran for the celebrations.

No. 407

Sir W. Seeds (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 7, 6.45 p.m.)
No. 86 Telegraphic [C 6706/3356/18]

MOSCOW, May 7, 1939, 7.15 p.m.

Your telegram No. 98.¹

I do not understand reference to Point 6 of Soviet proposal in paragraph 6 of your telegram under reference. Is this a mistaken reference?

¹ No. 389.

No. 408

Viscount Halifax to Sir W. Seeds (Moscow)

No. 102 Telegraphic [C 6706/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 7, 1939, 11.0 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 86.¹

By Point 6 I meant to refer to Soviet proposal that the three Governments would undertake not to make separate peace, and paragraphs 7 and 8 of my telegram No. 98² deal with this point.

¹ No. 407.

² No. 389.

No. 409

Sir P. Loraine (Rome) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 8, 10.0 a.m.)

No. 441 Telegraphic [R 3709/57/22]

ROME, *May 8, 1939, 9.20 a.m.*

Official communiqué issued tonight¹ states that in conversations between Italian and German Minister for Foreign Affairs the existing general political situation has been closely examined. The exact identity of views of the two Governments has once more been noted and it has been decided to establish ('fissare') definitely and from a formal point of view the relations between the two States of the Axis in a political and military Pact. In this way Italy and Germany propose to contribute efficaciously to assuring peace in Europe.²

Repeated to Berlin.

¹ This telegram was drafted on May 7. ² This pact was signed in Berlin on May 22.

No. 410

Mr. Orde (Riga) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 8, 2.30 p.m.)

No. 14 Telegraphic [N 2327/64/63]

RIGA, *May 8, 1939, 1.54 p.m.*

My telegram No. 13.¹

Minister for Foreign Affairs who was in Tallinn on May 6 told me last night that on April 28 the German Government had enquired whether the Latvian Government were prepared to conclude a Non-Aggression Pact. More than once in the past year the Latvian Government had expressed readiness to do so, and on May 4 they replied to the present enquiry in the affirmative. A German draft had now been received which I understood would be satisfactory; the Estonian Government had also received it. It was of a very simple character corresponding, he thought, with Article 4 of the recent German-Lithuanian Treaty² though he had no text of the latter with him.

He said that the Latvian Government had replied to recent German enquiry whether Latvia considered herself threatened by Germany by saying

¹ Not printed. This telegram reported an announcement on May 5 that the German and Latvian Governments had agreed to sign a non-aggression pact. See also No. 383.

² For the text of this Treaty see Volume IV of this Series, No. 501.

that nothing in actual German-Latvian relations led them to feel menaced but that the general situation caused them anxiety.

In reply to a suggestion from the United States Government that they might commend President Roosevelt's message as a contribution towards peace the Latvian Government, while expressing a hope that it would prove to be such, had excused themselves from taking up any specific attitude towards a step with which they had not been originally associated.

Speculating on the possible reasons for M. Litvinov's resignation, he said he felt certain that the Soviet Government wished to avoid any real commitment. I took the opportunity of speaking on the lines indicated in your telegram No. 20 to Helsingfors³ but he evidently had no apprehensions as to what His Majesty's Government might be doing.

³ Not printed. This telegram of April 28 reported a conversation between Mr. Strang and the Finnish Minister, who was assured that His Majesty's Government realized that Soviet assistance should not be forced on any country which did not desire it, but that subject to that condition they had taken as a starting-point M. Stalin's recent statement that it was the policy of the Soviet Government to support any victim of aggression which defended itself.

No. 411

Sir P. Ramsay (Copenhagen) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 8, 8.0 p.m.)
No. 25 Telegraphic [N 2364/64/63]

COPENHAGEN, May 8, 1939, 6.25 p.m.

Minister for Foreign Affairs informs me that Northern Ministers in Berlin were sent for and received separately. They were asked with reference to Herr Hitler's speech and President Roosevelt's message, whether their Governments were prepared to discuss Non-Aggression Pacts with Germany. There were no further particulars and certainly no mention of economic conditions.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs expects it will be possible to devise common answers at Stockholm¹ and points out that the proposal is only to discuss the conclusion of Non-Aggression Pacts. In process of the discussion other questions may of course be raised.

Repeated to Stockholm, Oslo and Helsingfors.

¹ The four Scandinavian Ministers for Foreign Affairs met at Stockholm on May 9 to discuss the German proposal. See No. 467.

No. 412

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 8, 8.45 p.m.)
No. 362 Telegraphic [R 3756/6/22]

BERLIN, May 8, 1939, 7.21 p.m.

Your telegram No. 172 Saving to Paris.¹

The Nuncio, who was received by Herr Hitler at Berchtesgaden on May 5, mentioned to the Counsellor today that, having been requested to promise

¹ No. 399.

to maintain the strictest secrecy, he could say nothing about his interview there. The Nuncio nevertheless said that he had been well received and was much impressed by his first visit to Berchtesgaden—the German Government had placed a special aeroplane at his disposal. He added that he hoped that His Majesty's Government would note that the present Pope since his accession² had not in public uttered a single word of criticism of German policy towards the Church. His Holiness had moreover taken special action to see that 'Osservatore Romano' did likewise.

Repeated to Warsaw and Paris.

² Cardinal Pacelli was elected Pope Pius XII on March 2, 1939.

No. 413

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 8, 10.0 p.m.)
No. 363 Telegraphic [C 6735/15/18]

BERLIN, May 8, 1939, 8.56 p.m.

French Ambassador tells me he has had several indications from different sources here to the effect that Hitler has come to an understanding with Stalin.¹ It is rumoured here that any understanding might take the form of a Non-Aggression Pact. In this connexion it is perhaps significant that press comment on Molotov's appointment has been far from unfriendly and contains none of the usual abuse of Bolshevism.²

Repeated to Warsaw.

¹ See also the French Yellow Book, 'Documents Diplomatiques 1938-1939', No. 123.

² A Foreign Office minute dated May 9 on this telegram reads: 'This story is very persistent. It is *not* supported by the accounts in today's telegrams [Nos. 421-2] of Sir W. Seeds' talk with M. Molotov or the M.A.'s recent talk with Marshal Voroshilov and it is inherently improbable. On the other hand the Germans and Italians have every interest in putting such stories about and the Russians might not be overhasty to contradict them as they might well enhance the value of the Soviet connexion in our eyes'.

No. 414

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax
(Received May 9, 9.30 a.m.)
No. 201 Telegraphic [R 3787/661/67]

ANGORA, May 8, 1939, 9.10 p.m.

My telegram No. 192.¹

Minister for Foreign Affairs informs me that he gave to representatives of Balkan Entente and of Saadabad Pact Powers² an outline of the gist of Declaration.

¹ No. 391.

² Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq.

2. He also made a statement to Bulgarian Minister. The latter turned extremely white.

3. Minister for Foreign Affairs then said that German Ambassador had seen a report of our negotiations and forthcoming declaration in local newspaper (since suppressed on account of this publication). Herr von Papen had at once called on Secretary-General. On being informed that report was well-founded Herr von Papen remarked that Turkish decision would completely upset the equilibrium and would increase risk of war from 40 to 60 per cent. He urged Secretary-General to delay matters as Germany would shortly put a very favourable proposal before Turkey. Secretary-General said that Turkish Government could not go back. After further conversation Herr von Papen divulged that proposal which he expected to make involved entry of Italy and Bulgaria into Balkan Entente followed by a guarantee of Balkan external frontiers by Germany. Secretary-General pointed out that it had been the entry of Italy into Albania which had necessitated Turkish policy of understanding with Western Powers and that actual admission of Italy into Balkan Entente would be the last straw.

4. Minister for Foreign Affairs connected in his mind remarks of German Ambassador, pallor of Bulgarian Minister, and demonstration during military parade in Sofia on May 6³ as indications that the Axis policy must have already gone some way in heading Bulgaria off from Balkan Entente.

5. Having in mind your telegram No. 159⁴ I asked Minister for Foreign Affairs whether he considered Bulgaria as lost to the Balkan Entente. He said he would not go so far. Bulgarian Government would probably think things over in the light of forthcoming declaration of Anglo-Turkish policy and of presence of Turkish troops in Thrace and might modify their views. I then mentioned, on most hypothetical basis, suggestion in paragraph 2 of your telegram No. 159. He said he thought it would be of no use at present to mention the Dobrudja. On the other hand it would help him greatly in his conversations with M. Gafencu here if His Majesty's Government could make some statement to Roumanian Government of importance which they attached to inclusion of Bulgaria in Balkan Entente. I venture to suggest that if something of the kind could be said at Bucharest and if I could inform Minister for Foreign Affairs no harm and possibly some good might be done.

Repeated to Paris, Rome, Athens, Belgrade, Bucharest and Sofia.

³ A marginal note made in the Foreign Office on this sentence reads: 'We have heard nothing officially of this'.

⁴ Not printed. In this telegram of May 6, it was suggested that the Turkish Government might make 'soundings in Sofia, on a purely hypothetical basis, as to whether, in the event of Roumania being prepared to consider a territorial concession in the Southern Dobrudja now or within some fixed limit of time, and of Greece being ready to give Bulgaria a free zone at Salonika, Bulgaria would give undertakings to abandon all her other claims'. If the result of these soundings seemed favourable, the Turkish Government could then inform the other members of the Balkan Entente.

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax

(Received May 9, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 202 Telegraphic [E 3401/63/89]

My telegram No. 198.¹

ANGORA, May 8, 1939, 9.30 p.m.

Minister for Foreign Affairs sent for me on May 8 in order to speak about Hatay negotiations.²

2. His Excellency described in angry terms the exasperation caused by attitude of French Government. He said there was now a complete *crise de confiance*. French Government had played with Turkish Government and had deceived them. It was impossible to carry on negotiations thus as Turkish Government could place no faith in French proposals which might at any moment be modified. He was in the act of drafting a telegram to Turkish Ambassador in Paris.

3. I gathered from Minister for Foreign Affairs that he intends to regard negotiations as suspended. I asked him what were the difficulties which divided the two Governments. He said that it was not so much a case of concrete difficulties as of the way Turkish Government were being treated, which had destroyed all confidence on their side. They [*sic*? the French] had acted like children. Apart from this as far as I was able to gather the main difficulties concerned certain villages which French desired to retain, fact that French Government were insisting that transfer of Hatay should not come into force until termination of mandate, question of frontier guarantees, date of withdrawal of French troops, &c.

4. As regards the first of these points Minister for Foreign Affairs remarked to me angrily that French Government were bargaining about a few villages when Turkey was offering the whole of her manhood to co-operate with Western Powers.

5. Minister for Foreign Affairs added that result had been to place him in a most awkward position *vis-à-vis* his colleagues and the entire Government in correspondingly awkward position *vis-à-vis* the Party. They had had definite promises from French Government on the strength of which they had said that negotiations were within reach of a satisfactory conclusion and now they had been entirely let down. He had had these promises from M. Bonnet, M. Massigli,³ and General Weygand.

6. Minister for Foreign Affairs spoke with great heat and it is quite clear that this question is having the worst possible effect on Franco-Turkish relations. He said Turkish Government regarded the matter as quite distinct from wider questions now at issue but that they would do nothing with France on the wider questions if it were not for the wishes of His Majesty's Government.

¹ Not printed. In this telegram of May 7 Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen reported that the negotiations regarding the Hatay were still prejudicing Franco-Turkish relations.

² The negotiations between France and Turkey for the cession of the Hatay.

³ M. Massigli was French Ambassador in Turkey.

7. Minister for Foreign Affairs said he felt bound to inform me of **this** owing to closeness and frankness of our relations.

8. I hesitate to put forward any suggestion but you will see that the **main** trouble is due to three things:—

- (a) Turkish *amour propre* has been wounded.
- (b) French Government appear to have given general promises **which** they have not fulfilled.
- (c) There is therefore entire lack of confidence that French Government will abide by proposals which they made.

Repeated to Paris.

No. 416

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 9, 9.30 a.m.)
No. 145 Telegraphic [R 3752/6/22]

WARSAW, May 8, 1939, 9.35 p.m.

Your telegram No. 146.¹

Minister for Foreign Affairs states that the Papal Nuncio only conveyed to him the Vatican's proposal this morning and that he will give me the considered views of his Government tomorrow or Wednesday.

Repeated to Berlin.

¹ No. 399.

No. 417

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 9, 9.30 a.m.)
No. 146 Telegraphic [C 6806/92/55]

WARSAW, May 8, 1939, 9.35 p.m.

Your telegram No. 143.¹

I put before Minister for Foreign Affairs all the considerations raised in your telegram. M. Beck at first sight thought that the third alternative suggested in paragraph 5 would be the most satisfactory. He has however requested Polish Commissioner-General at Danzig to come here tomorrow and would like to consult him before giving me a definite answer.

2. He is quite prepared to invite M. Burckhardt to visit Warsaw, if you think it would be a good move, and has no objection to him calling at Berlin on the way.

3. I will telegraph M. Beck's definite views either tomorrow evening or Wednesday morning.

4. On my asking M. Beck if he knew what views of Swedish Government were on this subject, he told me that Polish Minister in Stockholm had just reported that M. Sandler appeared to have much modified his views and would have no objection to matters being left as they are.

5. I saw German Ambassador today for the first time since his return at

¹ No. 374.

the end of last week from four weeks' leave of absence. He confirmed what M. Beck had already told me, that he had not yet seen anyone in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and I gather that he has for the moment no instructions to make any further move here as regards (? Danzig)². He told me that the passage in M. Beck's speech which had aroused the greatest indignation in Berlin was the reference to offer of a twenty-five year guarantee. He said Herr Hitler was making a great concession in offering this guarantee, more especially in view of the feeling of German public opinion regarding the Corridor. He failed to see how any basis could now be found for a settlement of the Danzig question and insisted that Polish Government would not have adopted an intransigent attitude had it not been for the British guarantee. I replied that Poland had answered the German proposals and made counter-proposals on March 26 before the Prime Minister's declaration and stated that in my view the guarantee had made no difference to Poland's attitude.

Repeated to Berlin, Stockholm and Danzig.

² The text is here uncertain.

No. 418

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 9)

No. 268 Saving: Telegraphic [R 3753/6/22]

PARIS, May 8, 1939

Your telegram No. 172 Saving.¹

As reported in my telegram No. 194,² Minister for Foreign Affairs threw cold water on this proposal directly he heard of it from the Nuncio.

As regards your alternative suggestions, M. Bonnet would have no objection, provided the Polish Government agree, if the Pope offered his good offices over Danzig, but His Excellency would very definitely object to Papal good offices regarding Franco-Italian discussions. He assures me that these will probably proceed satisfactorily, and in any case prefers that the negotiations should be confined to the two countries interested.

(Following for Foreign Office only.)

Earlier in the afternoon M. Léger informed His Majesty's Minister that any conference would be very dangerous; it was what Signor Mussolini had been trying to inveigle the Western Powers into for a long time (his Four-Power Conference). The proposal was an Italian manœuvre designed to secure that the Italian Government should be the arbiter between Germany and Poland; Germany the arbiter between France and Italy, with Great Britain as a sort of super-arbiter. It was clearly the idea of the Cardinal Secretary of State, acting as an Italian rather than as a Vatican official. The Cardinal Secretary of State was not a man of great value, and, as M. Léger had had the opportunity to ascertain during the Abyssinian crisis, he was very much of an Italian in sentiment.

Nor was Lord Halifax's personal suggestion for mediatory action by the

¹ No. 399.

² No. 375.

Pope between Italy and France acceptable. The French Government had let His Majesty's Government know that they did not desire any mediatory action on the part of Great Britain, all the less did they desire mediation by the Vatican, which could hardly divest itself of Italian feeling.

The whole proposal was also undesirable from the point of view of the position of the Vatican itself. It would be far better if it reserved its action for appeals on a general and moral plane for peace, &c., and did not get involved in political matters which it should leave to the Chancelleries.

Repeated to Warsaw and Vatican.

No. 419

Minute by Mr. Ingram

[R 3814/661/67]

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 8, 1939

The Paris Embassy rang up this morning with reference to our instructions in Foreign Office telegram No. 193¹ of May 7 telling them to inform the French Government of the present stage in our exchange of views with the Turkish Government and our reactions as to the French desire to be associated if possible in a tripartite form with any declarations and agreements reached between London and Angora.

Mr. Mack enquired whether these instructions still held good notwithstanding the arrival of Angora telegrams Nos. 192,² 193,³ 194,⁴ 195⁵ and 196.⁶ I told him that I thought they did and explained that the wording of our declaration presupposed the conclusion ultimately of a treaty between ourselves and Turkey. We did not know whether the French were contemplating similar action. If, however, it were possible for them to have the declaration transmogrified into a tripartite one we might not object, but here the question of time came in and what the French intentions were regarding an ultimate treaty. Mr. Mack then asked whether all the explanations in our telegram No. 144 to Angora⁷ should be passed on to the French. I told him that we had no objection at all, and said that it was particularly desirable that paragraphs 2 and 3 of this telegram should be explained to the French.

E. M. B. INGRAM

¹ No. 405.

² No. 391.

³ No. 393.

⁴ No. 392.

⁵ No. 394.

⁶ No. 396.

⁷ No. 310.

No. 420

Letter from Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Sir A. Cadogan

[C 7103/15/18]

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, May 8, 1939

1. It may at any moment become necessary to make some strong representations or even address a definite warning to the German Government.

2. The difficulty about Ribbentrop is:

(a) that he does not seem either to wish to understand or to pay any attention to what one says. As Dirksen mildly said to me the other day 'The Reichsminister is a bad listener'.

(b) Even if he does listen or understand, one cannot feel sure that what one says will be passed on to Hitler if it is not calculated to please the latter; and

(c) Even if it is passed on, one cannot be sure that it will not be entirely misinterpreted or falsified.

3. Quite apart from personal considerations, if I have a verbal communication to make I regard it as much more useful to make it to Weizsäcker rather than Ribbentrop. The former makes notes of what one says and they probably form the basis of a written report which has at least the chance of being passed on in that form to the Führer.

4. On the other hand if it is something really disagreeable, I would rather make the representations involved to Ribbentrop, but, if possible, in written form as an *aide-mémoire* or, if necessary, a direct note or memorandum. Otherwise there may be misunderstanding and confusion. It may even be well to consider whether, if and when the moment comes, the *démarche* should not take the form of, or be accompanied by, a letter from the Prime Minister to Hitler himself which I would either transmit through Ribbentrop or ask the latter to arrange for me to present myself to Hitler.

5. And, of course, if it is humanly possible to avoid it, the fact that such representations are being made should be kept from all public knowledge until after they have actually been made.

6. I venture to make these suggestions now, rather than wait till the time comes, for obvious reasons.

NEVILLE HENDERSON

I do not feel in these days that there is any certainty that Hitler would receive me at any given moment. It is not like last year. He might well seek to snub His Majesty's Government through me. That possibility must also be borne in mind.

N. H.

No. 421

Sir W. Seeds (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 9, 9.30 a.m.)
No. 87 Telegraphic [C 6804/3356/18]

MOSCOW, May 9, 1939, 1.47 a.m.

Your telegram No. 99.¹

I called on M. Molotov this afternoon.²

2. On my mentioning M. Litvinov's departure he at once said that Soviet policy had not changed, that their proposals still held good, and that they were awaiting an answer.

¹ No. 397.

² This telegram was drafted on May 8.

3. I then spoke as instructed and finally gave him, with some alterations, paragraphs 6 (from words: 'in this task' onwards) and 7 of your telegram.

4. He listened attentively and proceeded to subject me to relentless cross-examination on following points:

(a) Did we mean to start military conversations at once? I said military questions would doubtless be discussed later on if necessity arose under last line of suggested Declaration. He said that if that were so His Majesty's Government had changed their minds as Sir J. Simon's statement in House of Commons (on April 13)³ was in favour of far-reaching military agreement. I answered that I did not remember statement in question but probably Sir J. Simon was giving his personal views on a hypothetical question. When pressed I eventually said that His Majesty's Government considered that issue of suggested Declaration by Soviet Government without starting military talks was all that was required at the moment but I was sure that if friendly consideration were given to our suggestion His Majesty's Government would be glad to discuss such points as might arise therefrom.

(b) M. Molotov said that I had laid stress on Poland's reluctance to be associated publicly with Soviet Union in the matter of possible assistance but his own information was that Polish Government had now changed their attitude in this respect. I answered that such was not the impression so far as I knew either of His Majesty's Government or of French Government. He said Poland was only directly mentioned in Point 2 of Soviet proposals but what about Point 1? Did Polish Government's objection hold good as to that point? I refused to be drawn and insisted that Soviet proposals had been considered as a whole. I gave similar reply to question why His Majesty's Government had not given considered answer to each point of Soviet proposals.

5. Asked whether His Majesty's Government had given guarantees to Holland, Belgium and Switzerland I said that Western Europe was outside my province. When pressed I pointed out that Low Countries had always been considered vital point in Great Britain's defences.

6. I spent most unpleasant ten minutes over question of French reply.⁴ M. Molotov said Soviet Government had made identic proposals to both Great Britain and France and they were being given two different replies. He kept on asking whether each Government had 'approved' the other's answer. I was in a predicament as I have no instructions what to say in regard to these divergent replies. So I kept on saying that each Government viewed the matter from its own particular angle and had 'no objection' to the other's expressing its views. France was naturally in a different position owing to her Pact with Soviet Union. It only showed the complicated nature of the problem to meet which His Majesty's Government were now making the most sincere effort by the present proposal.

³ See Parl. Deb., 5th ser., H. of C., vol. 346, cols. 131-40. At one point Sir J. Simon said with regard to a suggestion of a military alliance 'There is no objection on our part in principle to such a proposition at all'.

⁴ See No. 351.

7. M. Molotov said the Soviet Government would give careful consideration to our views. He repeated that Soviet policy had not changed but added cryptic remark that it was liable to be altered if the other States changed theirs.

8. I should add that he commented unfavourably on our delay in answering. I repeated what I had previously said as to necessity for consulting other Governments. When he finally pointed out that Soviet Government had always replied to us within three days instead of three weeks, I answered that I took off my hat to Soviet efficiency. He seemed pleased and on that note a somewhat trying interview closed.⁵

Repeated to Warsaw, Bucharest, Angora, Paris and Berlin.

⁵ For a fuller account of this interview see No. 436.

No. 422

Sir W. Seeds (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 9, 9.30 a.m.)
No. 88 Telegraphic [N 2346/233/38]

MOSCOW, May 9, 1939, 1.48 a.m.

Your telegram No. 98.¹

My immediately preceding telegram.²

Military Attaché called on Marshal Voroshilov yesterday in connexion with an invitation to attend British military manœuvres next September. The Marshal said that it was necessary to close the front against Germany and that it depended on us whether it was to be closed or not. He repeated the latter statement afterwards. Allowing for the bellicose tendencies of a Red General it was evident to me that this member of the Kremlin Inner Circle would not have spoken thus if the highest authority had determined to change Soviet policy.

2. As I have only met M. Molotov once before I do not know him sufficiently to determine his attitude during today's conversation. But he has the manner of a true bureaucrat which would explain his stream of questions which in their turn express more a desire for information than an intention of letting us down.

Repeated to Paris, Warsaw, Berlin, Bucharest and Angora.

¹ No. 389.

² No. 421.

No. 423

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora)
No. 161 Telegraphic [R 3689/661/67]

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 9, 1939, 4.0 p.m.

To Angora only.

Your telegrams Nos. 192 to 197 inclusive.¹

1. With regard to the proposed Declaration, most of the amendments suggested by the Turkish Government are unobjectionable. One alteration

¹ Nos. 391-6.

of substance in paragraph 3, however, I cannot agree to. To take the paragraphs of the proposed declaration in turn, the following are my comments :

Paragraph 1. Agreed.

Paragraph 2. Agreed on the assumption that the words 'comportant des engagements réciproques' are merely intended to be a translation of my original wording 'of a reciprocal character'. If this is so, the English translation of this paragraph would read as follows:

'It is agreed that the two countries will conclude a definitive long term agreement of a reciprocal character in the interest of their national security.'

Paragraph 3. The Turkish draft merely speaks of 'an act of aggression in the Mediterranean area' and takes no account of my original wording 'an act of aggression leading to war in the Mediterranean'. I am quite prepared to alter 'Mediterranean' to 'Mediterranean area'. I am, however, surprised at the omission from the Turkish text of the words 'leading to war'. Your telegram No. 194² contains no explanation of this particular Turkish amendment. These words are essential from our point of view in order to ensure that the Turkish undertaking operates equally in the case where Great Britain is at war with Italy as a result of an act of aggression committed outside the Mediterranean area. Your telegram No. 163³ (Point 1) shows that the Turkish Government appreciated this necessity, and I had understood from your telegram No. 167,⁴ paragraph 2(a) and paragraph 3, that the Turkish Government for their part were prepared to couch their undertaking in such a way as to cover this contingency. I trust, therefore, that the Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs will be prepared to agree to the re-insertion of the words 'leading to war' in this particular phrase. I have no objection to the insertion of the words 'to co-operate effectively' and to the use of the terms 'aid and assistance'. I trust, therefore, that the Turkish Government can be persuaded to agree to the following wording of this paragraph:

'Pending the completion of the definitive agreement, His Majesty's Government and the Turkish Government declare that in the event of an act of aggression leading to war in the Mediterranean area they would be prepared to co-operate effectively and to lend each other all aid and assistance in their power.'

Paragraph 4. I agree to the present tense, but should be grateful for information on two points:

(a) The word after 'envisagé' has not been decypherable. Please let me know what it is and whether it affects in any way our original wording 'like the proposed agreement'.

(b) I should be glad to know if the words after 'réciproque' imply more than the English version 'should the necessity arise'.

² No. 392.

³ No. 286.

⁴ No. 291.

On the assumption that (a) and (b) do not affect the original English version, this paragraph will now read as follows:

'This Declaration, like the proposed Agreement, is not directed against any country but is designed to assure Great Britain and Turkey of mutual aid and assistance should the necessity arise.'

Paragraph 5. Agreed. The paragraph will now read as follows in English:

'It is recognised by the two Governments that certain matters, including the more precise definition of the various conditions which would bring the reciprocal engagements into operation, will require closer examination before the definitive Agreement can be completed. This examination is proceeding.'

Paragraph 6. Agreed.

2. I am still very reluctant to omit all mention of the Balkans in this declaration and would urge upon the Turkish Government that between paragraphs 5 and 6 a further paragraph be entered to the following effect:

'The two Governments recognise that it is also necessary to ensure the establishment of security in the Balkans and they are consulting together with the object of achieving this purpose as speedily as possible.'

The above would form paragraph 6 and the former paragraph 6 be re-numbered paragraph 7. You should urge this insertion upon the Turkish Government in the Declaration since it will be most difficult to explain the omission of all reference to the Balkans from the Declaration itself (*vide* your telegram No. 195⁵).

3. It will be of great value if you can obtain the consent of the Turkish Government to the foregoing alterations before Wednesday midday when there will be a Foreign Policy Committee of the Cabinet. Otherwise I see little chance of arranging publication before next week.

Repeated to Sofia, Bucharest, Belgrade and Athens.

⁵ No. 394.

No. 424

Sir P. Loraine (Rome) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 9, 7.0 p.m.)

No. 445 Telegraphic [R 3816/57/22]

ROME, May 9, 1939, 4.45 p.m.

My telegram No. 436.¹

It is too early to appreciate accurately the implications of the Italian-German political and military alliance decided on in principle at meeting at Milan between Count Ciano and Herr von Ribbentrop.

2. Italian public opinion is indicated in Gayda's article yesterday evening—see my telegram No. 158 Saving²—which is no doubt inspired. The effort

¹ No. 388.

² Not printed. Signor Gayda's article attacked the alleged 'encirclement policy' of France and Great Britain against the Axis Powers.

to lay the responsibility on the shoulders of the democracies is laboured and specious. The contention that the new alliance is a factor making for the peace of Europe is hardly convincing though I have no doubt that Italians would like to believe it so; recognition that the policy of *blocs* has been reaped [*sic*] is unintentionally frank; the foreshadowing of fresh stimulants is not reassuring.

3. It is perhaps unfortunate that it has not been possible for me to see Signor Mussolini before this step was taken but Minister for Foreign Affairs told me I could not properly see him before the presentation of my credentials. I do not pretend that I could have changed his mind which presumably was already made up but perhaps I could have had a first-hand impression of the lines on which his mind was working.

4. As it is I can only surmise that his action was in accordance with his reputed overriding of alleged objectors at the last meeting of Fascist Grand Council against too close relations with Germany on the ground that even if Italy had not yet derived dividends from the Axis she would obtain them in due course and certainly could not secure them by any other means.

5. It seems highly probable that pressure to conclude alliance came from German side and that it was very strong; one can guess that the negotiations for an Anti-Aggression Pact as between the United Kingdom, France and Russia coupled with the foreshadowed conclusion of an Anglo-Turkish Agreement to a like effect furnished Herr von Ribbentrop with powerful arguments in urging Italian Government to conclude alliance.

6. We can assume, I think, that Italy must have sought some return for the virtually complete abandonment of her liberty of action. It may be that my telegram No. 444³ supplied the clue. There is no doubt that although the Italians would obey Signor Mussolini's orders, Italy's participation in a war for the sake of Germany's claims on Poland would be intensely unpopular in this country.

7. To judge by the very cordial personal welcome extended to me myself, by obvious popularity of British jumping team at Rome Horse Show that ended yesterday (and equally obvious unpopularity of German team), and other indications which I grant are only straws in the wind though they confirm the impressions that the Prime Minister and you yourself derived here, there is great friendliness and respect here for United Kingdom and a strong desire so far as we are concerned to let bygones be bygones. But I yet cannot rid myself of the impression that behind the friendliness of the ruling circles lies the hope of favours to come, particularly in satisfaction of Italy's claims at the expense of France.

8. And I cannot but fear that behind the cry for peace *and justice* lies aching ambition for further colonial expansion and ownership of sources of raw materials.

9. Actually the position which a written alliance creates will differ more in form than in substance from that which preceded it.

³ Not printed. This telegram of May 8 reported a rumour that Italy had consented to an alliance with Germany in return for an assurance that Germany would not attack Poland.

10. Signor Mussolini may have felt he had no alternative but to yield to German pressure. But what was his dominant consideration in incurring the unpopularity of doing so? The main alarm at rapidly growing military strength of anti-aggression front? Or mainly defiance and a determination to fight for that which he has been unable to secure by more peaceful means? Time may solve the enigma.

11. As for ourselves may I suggest that we should remain quite calm in face of this new but not altogether unexpected development? That will for the present suit the case whether Italian motives were alarm or defiance.

12. My French colleague thinks the clue to significance of alliance will be Germany's attitude thenceforward towards Poland and he expects this to be manifest in the next two weeks. I do not disagree from [*sic* ? with] him.

No. 425

Viscount Halifax to Sir P. Loraine (Rome)

No. 236 Telegraphic [R 3689/661/67]

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 9, 1939, 5.20 p.m.

You will have seen from recent telegram sections¹ the progress being made in our negotiations with Turkey for a mutual guarantee. Our telegram to Angora No. 145² contains the text of a Declaration to be made regarding mutual assistance in the event of an act of aggression leading to war in the Mediterranean. The precise text has not yet been agreed between His Majesty's Government and the Turkish Government but the question has arisen as to whether ultimately the Declaration should be bipartite or tripartite (to include the French). The French Government are insistent that the Declaration should be tripartite. It has, however, been suggested that separate Anglo-Turkish and Franco-Turkish declarations in similar terms might be deemed less offensive and provocative in Italian eyes than a single tripartite declaration, inasmuch as the latter might give rise to a greater impression of organised encirclement than the former. I should be grateful for your views on this point.

Repeated to Paris and Angora.

¹ The printed copies of important telegrams circulated weekly to His Majesty's Missions abroad.

² No. 311.

No. 426

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax

(Received May 10, 8.45 a.m.)

No. 150 Telegraphic [R 3821/6/22]

WARSAW, May 9, 1939, 10.21 p.m.

My telegram No. 145.¹

M. Beck told me today that he had now been authorised by his Government to state that the Polish Government would prefer the alternative

¹ No. 416.

suggested by you, namely, that the Pope should offer his good offices. M. Beck feels that a conference without due preparation might possibly do more harm than good and he therefore proposes to inform the Vatican with due courtesy that he considers a conference would be inopportune but that the Polish Government would be grateful for any steps which the Holy Father can take to assist German-Polish negotiations on outstanding questions.

2. He asked me to thank you especially for having consulted him in this matter and expressed his satisfaction at this fresh evidence of identity of views between the two Governments.

Repeated to Paris, Vatican and Berlin.

No. 427

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax

(Received May 10, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 149 Telegraphic [N 2375/2306/38]

WARSAW, May 9, 1939, 10.22 p.m.

My telegram No. 144.¹

I asked Minister for Foreign Affairs today whether it was a fact that M. Potemkin was making a visit to Warsaw. M. Beck told me that he had been informed by the Soviet Chargé d'Affaires that M. Potemkin would arrive tonight on his way to Moscow and that he would leave tomorrow. He added that should M. Potemkin ask him for an interview he would gladly give it.

2. He further stated that the Polish Ambassador in Moscow had had another interview with M. Molotov of the most cordial description. M. Molotov had asked for an explanation as to Poland's attitude towards possible Soviet collaboration with the Western Powers in guarantee pacts and had expressed himself as satisfied with the Polish Ambassador's explanations.

M. Molotov had also expressed his appreciation of M. Beck's recent speech. Repeated to Moscow.

¹ Not printed. This telegram reported that M. Beck had told Sir H. Kennard that the Polish Ambassador at Moscow had had a 'highly satisfactory conversation' with M. Molotov on May 7.

No. 428

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax

(Received May 10, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 148 Telegraphic [C 6859/92/55]

WARSAW, May 9, 1939, 10.28 p.m.

My telegram No. 146.¹

Colonel Beck told me today that having consulted Polish Commissioner-General at Danzig he was now definitely of opinion that the best course would be for the Committee to take no action and to leave matters as they are.

¹ No. 417.

2. It is immaterial to him whether M. Burckhardt returns to Danzig or not but he feels that were it to be decided that he was to resign a vacuum would be left which would have to be filled. And he felt that nothing should be done which might aggravate the present delicate situation.

3. Should Your Lordship consider it desirable, Colonel Beck is quite prepared to send an immediate invitation to M. Burckhardt to visit Warsaw and he is even ready to suggest that he should visit Berlin on his way.

Repeated to Stockholm, Berlin and Danzig.

No. 429

Sir P. Loraine (Rome) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 10, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 446 Telegraphic [R 3817/7/22]

ROME, May 9, 1939, 10.40 p.m.

Paris telegram No. 195¹ third paragraph.

French Ambassador told me yesterday that his instructions were by no means precise: that he could interpret them as authorizing him to do nothing or as meaning that he could move rather tepidly in the direction of conversations.

2. But he intends to see Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs shortly and I encouraged him to do.

Repeated to Paris.

¹ No. 376.

No. 430

Sir P. Loraine (Rome) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 10, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 449 Telegraphic [R 3819/6/22]

ROME, May 9, 1939, 10.40 p.m.

Mr. Osborne's telegram No. 23.¹

In view of lukewarm tenor of answers so far received by the Pope it would seem that ground will have to be very carefully prepared if any useful negotiations are to be initiated.

2. Even if Signor Mussolini is anxious for German-Polish dispute to be discussed he is not likely to take any step which would be unwelcome to Herr Hitler. He seems equally unwilling to press French for Franco-Italian problems to form subject of discussion except between the two countries. In the circumstances, so far as Italian Government is concerned, I cannot help thinking that no concrete action in support of the Pope's proposal should be undertaken until we have had time to discover whether there is a genuine chance of good coming from His Holiness' initiative.

3. I suggest that it is important however that even if we find it difficult to believe in the present efficacy of the proposals we should, as on previous occasions, do nothing to discourage peace initiatives on lines that concord

¹ No. 404.

with our own ideas, and thus avoid giving Italians or others any opportunity of claiming that the democratic countries, while preaching pacific solution of disputes, are unwilling to put their principles into practice.

No. 431

Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)

No. 150 Telegraphic [C 6866/54/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 9, 1939, 11.50 p.m.

1. It is clear from your reports that Herr von Ribbentrop and others who think like him still believe that His Majesty's Government are not prepared to implement their guarantee to Poland, or at all events do not regard the Danzig question as coming within the scope of the guarantee.

2. I do not know what view the Army Command hold, but it occurs to me that if you see no objection, it would be useful, if an opportunity offered, to hold language on the following lines to General Keitel, the Commander-in-Chief, and/or the Chief-of-Staff.

3. We are naturally ready and anxious to see a fair settlement reached. But the Poles could never agree to procedure by way of unilateral action or ultimatum. If the German Government should demand the unconditional return of Danzig, it is in our view certain that the Poles would consider that their independence was menaced and that any employment of force by Germany for this purpose would be met by force on the part of Poland. And if by such action on Germany's part the Danzig situation so developed as to justify the Polish Government in invoking our guarantee there is no doubt that both we and the French would come in and that many other States would be likely to join us. The German Government may regard such an eventuality with equanimity, but in our view whatever damage they might inflict on the Western Powers, the latter would be quite certain to triumph in the end. In other words, if Herr Hitler provoked a war over Danzig, it would result not only in the destruction of the Nazi régime, but also very probably in the final collapse of the Great-German Reich.

Repeated to Rome.

No. 432

Viscount Halifax to Sir P. Loraine (Rome)

No. 239 Telegraphic [C 6866/54/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 9, 1939, 12.0 midnight

My telegram to Berlin No. 150.¹

If you get an opportunity, you might speak on the same lines unofficially to suitable personages in Rome and, more especially, those connected with the Court and the army.

Repeated to Berlin.

¹ No. 431.

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 9, 1939

Sir,

The Soviet Ambassador asked to see me this afternoon, and told me that he was speaking on instructions from his Government in seeking an elucidation of the formula which Your Excellency had been instructed to submit to M. Molotov.¹

2. M. Maisky said that he had gathered from the conversation he had had with me last week that it was our intention to make the obligations to be incurred by the Soviet Government on the one hand, and by France and Great Britain on the other, reciprocal in character, but his Government felt great doubt whether our formula in fact did this, and it seemed to them that there was some possibility of the Soviet Government being involved either in advance of France and ourselves or alone.

3. I went through the draft with M. Maisky, and drew his particular attention to the words we had added to this formula, 'in the event of Great Britain and France being involved in hostilities in fulfilment of these obligations.' We had added these words for the express purpose of making it clear to the Soviet Government that we were not asking them to do anything that we were not *ex hypothesi* doing ourselves.

4. M. Maisky replied to this by saying that there were many ways in which the strategical position might develop and that I had not wholly succeeded in removing his doubts. I told him that, while I had never attempted to disguise from myself the particular difference of the approach to the problem that had been made by the Soviet Government and ourselves, I did not think that on this particular point there was any room for doubt. I went on to assure him that, if his Government would set down precisely the point on which they felt misgiving, we would do our best to meet it, and I ventured to hope that if they put us in full possession of their doubts I could either show them that the draft in fact covered them, or I should hope that we could so amend it as to make our purpose indisputably plain.

5. He agreed that the purpose to which his observations were directed was to secure that, in the event of Russia being involved by her promise to render help to Poland and Roumania, she would not be rendering it alone. I repeated that I could not believe that there could be great difficulty in meeting this anxiety, always provided that the Soviet Government were not expecting us to travel outside the two conditions which we had attached to our guarantee, namely, (1) that the independence of Poland or Roumania should be plainly threatened (His Excellency interjected: 'Direct or indirect?'); (2) that these countries were determined to resist with their national forces.

6. M. Maisky seemed gratified by my explanation, and promised to submit a note of the actual point his Government might wish to raise.

¹ See No. 397.

7. I also drew the attention of the Ambassador to the concluding words of the formula, 'on such terms as might be agreed'. These words, I told him, we had also added to satisfy the Soviet Government that they would have some liberty of action in the discharge of the obligation that they might be willing to undertake; and that, while I fully recognised the undesirability of leaving all these discussions until the outbreak of war, we were, on the other hand, concerned to introduce the great steadying factor that would be made by such a Russian Declaration as we had provided, and that it might be possible thereafter to develop the situation in greater detail.

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

No. 434

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)

No. 1141 [R 3788/7/22]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 9, 1939*

Sir,

I had a few words with the French Ambassador after dinner last night, who told me that, as far as he knew, it was not at present the intention of the French Government to send any further unofficial emissary¹ to Rome for the purpose of conversations, and he thought the French Government had great hesitation about embarking on these conversations at all unless the ground was absolutely defined in advance.

2. He also undertook that the French Government was likely to feel the strongest reluctance to taking any action on the Pope's recent initiative, although they were likely to appreciate the desirability of the failure of the plan being attributed, if failure there was to be, to Germany rather than to France or ourselves.

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

¹ The reference appears to be to M. Baudouin. See No. 242.

No. 435

Viscount Halifax to Sir R. Hoare (Bucharest)

No. 236 [R 3815/122/37]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 9, 1939*

Sir,

The Roumanian Minister came to see me this afternoon to give me a message from M. Gafencu with regard to his recent visits to Rome and Belgrade. M. Tilea explained that M. Gafencu intended to write in memorandum form for my benefit a longer account of these visits, but he had thought that it would be useful to me to have in advance a brief summary of his impressions.

2. In Rome, although he was met with profuse official declarations regarding the eternity of the Axis, he was left with the very clear impression that the Italian Government were anxious for appeasement with the Western Powers. When faced with asseverations regarding the solidarity of the Axis, M. Gafencu had said that no one wished to break up an Axis which had created certain necessary links between two Powers—an expression which seemed to give pleasure. In spite of the announcement of the forthcoming military pact between Italy and Germany, M. Gafencu remained convinced of Italy's pacific intentions and derived the impression that Rome was ready to receive any suggestions made from any other quarter. Formal assurances were given him that Italy had no territorial claims against France, and he had the strong conviction that Italy would make every effort to extract herself from the intolerable atmosphere in which she found herself. He derived the impression that at the back of the Italian mind lay the conception that the elucidation of the situation might be found by a conference of four or more Great Powers.

3. In Belgrade M. Gafencu had found a spirit of depression. He had done his best to cheer up those with whom he came into contact, and in particular to instil some encouragement into the political leaders whom he saw. He insisted that the Balkan Pact should be maintained, and that, while a policy of friendship to all should be the watchword, the members should be careful not to come under the tutelage of any one group. For this reason he had advocated the undertaking of visits to foreign countries. He had tried to impress on those whom he met that it was essential that the Balkan Entente should maintain its cohesion. If, as he thought possible, the European situation were eventually to be cleared up by means of an international conference, it was essential that the voice of the Balkans should be a united one. He had found, as he expected, that Prince Paul's sentiments were faithful to his old friends. The Prince Regent had told him that after Rome and Berlin he would pay an unofficial visit to London. M. Gafencu is determined to remind Prince Paul of this intention, if necessary through King Carol and the Roumanian Court. M. Tilea then proceeded to inform me of the gist of a telegram which had been received from the Roumanian Minister in Belgrade, and from which it appeared that M. Markovitch was afraid that Turkey, if she came into a closer alliance with Great Britain and France, might try to evade her obligations under the Balkan Pact. M. Markovitch had been asked by M. Gafencu to fix up nothing with the Italian Government until after he had had an opportunity of further discussion with the Roumanian Government, and for this purpose it was hoped that a meeting between M. Gafencu and M. Markovitch might take place shortly somewhere on the Danube.

4. M. Tilea next enquired how matters stood with regard to negotiations with Russia. I informed him that they were proceeding along the lines of which he was already aware, and I explained the difficulties arising from the Russian anxiety not to be pledged unless His Majesty's Government and the French Government were similarly pledged. I told M. Tilea that I had just

seen M. Maisky, who had made it clear that Russian fears largely centred round the possibility of being involved alone in a conflict with Germany. The Roumanian Minister told me that he, too, had had a word with M. Maisky, who had asked him what the Roumanian attitude would be to the offer of an alliance by Russia. M. Tilea had replied that his Government could neither take part in an alliance nor in any negotiations connected therewith. It was impossible for Roumania to commit herself in time of peace to Russia, since any action tending in that direction would be regarded as evidence of hostility by the Axis Powers.

5. In reply to a question about the attitude of Japan, I said that it was clear to us that Japan would not welcome any Anglo-Soviet alliance if its terms extended to the Far East. I had been at some pains to assure the Japanese Ambassador here that we had no such intention in view.

6. The Minister next enquired about Bulgaria, and I told him that we had no fresh news from that quarter.

7. With regard to Turkey, which came next on his list of enquiries, I told M. Tilea that our negotiations were proceeding well, and that we hoped shortly to be able to make a joint Declaration regarding the Mediterranean. As regards the Balkans, our discussions and consultations with the Turkish Government were continuing; nothing concrete, however, had yet emerged. I explained that the Turkish Government had been anxious that their negotiations with us should not go ahead of their own negotiations with the Soviet Government.

8. When asked my views as to the recent Italo-German Declaration¹ of the intention to embody in treaty form the mutual interests and obligations, political and military, of the Axis, I said that I discerned little new in such a proposition. The Italian Ambassador had for months past consistently impressed on me the solidarity of the Axis in all circumstances.

9. The next item in the catechism was an enquiry for information regarding the Pope's initiative.² I told M. Tilea that certain unofficial suggestions had been made to us regarding a possible appeal by the Pope to the Great Powers. We were not directly concerned, but had asked for the views of the Governments in Paris and Warsaw. M. Tilea was inclined to think that the Pope's initiative was a dangerous one. I told M. Tilea that, as I had already informed the Apostolic Delegate, I regarded such an idea as a mark of Christian faith and courage, but that I would sooner the onus of throwing cold water on the project lay on German rather than on French or British shoulders.

10. The conversation next turned on Danzig, and I told the Minister that, although there had been no fresh developments and, so far as I was aware, no discussions were proceeding between Warsaw and Berlin, I could not but feel anxious as to the situation. Colonel Beck's speech³ had seemed to me excellent in many respects, but it was not clear what would happen if the Danzig Senate were suddenly to pass a resolution demanding incorporation in the Reich.

11. M. Tilea next volunteered the information, in strict confidence, that

¹ See No. 409.

² See No. 362.

³ See No. 386.

the reply given by Roumania to the recent German enquiry as to whether Roumania felt threatened by Germany had been drafted by King Carol himself.

12. The Roumanian Minister reverted for a moment to the question raised by M. Gafencu as to changing the status of our Legation in Bucharest to that of an Embassy. I replied that nothing M. Tilea could say could add to my consciousness of the importance which he and his Government attached to such a step. It was a matter I had very much in mind. We had, however, our difficulties, and, although M. Gafencu had said that the value of such a step would not be diminished by the simultaneous creation of British Embassies elsewhere, I was not sure that this overcame our own difficulties. I could only assure M. Tilea that I would have the matter yet more in my mind by reason of his reference to it this afternoon, and I fully realised the political importance it would have as a gesture, quite apart from the fact that it was a matter by which I knew his Sovereign set great store.

13. Finally, M. Tilea put in a strong plea that we should do something more for Roumania in the economic and armaments sphere. Every effort should be made to make our contribution to Roumania an impressive one. He could not conceal the fact that £5 million seemed to the Roumanian Government and people a small sum.⁴ Could not something be done to indicate that this was only a first step and that the door was open to further assistance? Perhaps the communiqué recording the result of the Mission could be worded so as to bear some such implication. Otherwise he was afraid that the results of the Commercial Mission would not create the political impression which was desired. The Germans were working hard in his country by means of every kind of propaganda, and it was essential to do something to combat its effect which would strike the imagination. I reminded M. Tilea, in reply, that many countries were clamouring at our door for assistance and that the sum of £5 million which we had now put at the disposal of the Roumanian Government was double that which had been under contemplation a few months ago. I nevertheless quite appreciated the importance of his representation and would bear it in mind.

I am, &c.,

HALIFAX

⁴ A trade agreement, which included a £5 million export credit, between His Majesty's Government and the Roumanian Government was concluded at Bucharest on May 11. It is printed in Cmd. 6018 (Treaty Series No. 25) of 1939.

No. 436

Sir W. Seeds (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 20)

No. 142 [C 7327/3356/18]

My Lord,

MOSCOW, May 9, 1939

I have the honour to report that I called on M. Molotov yesterday afternoon to carry out the instructions contained in your telegram No. 99.¹

¹ No. 397.

2. I opened the conversation by saying that the departure of M. Litvinov at this serious moment had given rise to much discussion abroad where the question was being asked what, if any, change in Soviet policy was thereby indicated. In particular, doubts had been expressed whether the policy proclaimed by M. Stalin—of giving assistance to nations victims of aggression and fighting for independence—would now continue to be explored in talks with other peace-loving Powers. M. Molotov at once stated, emphatically and briefly, that the policy of the Soviet Union was unchanged, that the proposals submitted to Great Britain and France still held good, and that the Soviet Government were awaiting our reply to those proposals.

3. I then told M. Molotov that I was instructed to convey the deep appreciation with which His Majesty's Government had learnt of the readiness of the Soviet Government to contribute towards an object which both Governments had in view, and they had given careful and sympathetic consideration to the proposals in question. It was unfortunate that the necessity for consulting other Governments interested had inevitably occasioned some delay.

4. I then proceeded to say that after exhaustive consideration His Majesty's Government had reluctantly come to the definite conclusion that, in the first place, the Soviet proposals, although logically complete, would require too long a time for negotiation, and chiefly, in the second place, that they did not take sufficiently into account the main difficulty with which we were faced. In the system amounting to a barrier against possible aggression which we were trying to establish, the key positions were held by Turkey and Poland. In the first of these cases there was no difficulty as the Turkish Government were very willing to be closely associated with the Soviet Union. But in the case of Poland, the Polish Government were strongly convinced that any immediate and public association with the Soviet Government for eventual assistance would be regarded by the German Government as a provocation. This opinion might be exaggerated, but it was certainly that, not only of the Polish Government, but of other foreign observers as well. Even were there only 5 per cent. of danger we must, I said, take it into grave consideration, for it would be folly to provoke trouble in our very efforts to avoid it. Now, under the Soviet proposals, there would be a public proclamation of automatic assistance by the Soviet Union to Poland—directly under Point 2 and indirectly under Point 1. Under the British proposal, on the other hand, there would, indeed, be a promise of Soviet assistance, but only if and when desired. As Your Lordship had said to M. Maisky last Saturday,² the Soviet and British proposals differed in form rather than in substance, but I would add that, in these days of intensive propaganda and artificial excitement, form was sometimes even more important than substance. (M. Molotov indicated assent, and referred later on to this proposition which seems therefore to have impressed him.) For these reasons, I continued, His Majesty's Government thought that their suggestion still held the field as the most practical means of dealing with the problem; I would like to leave with him

² May 6. See No. 401.

copy of a portion of my instructions which gave the general sense of Your Lordship's views and contained the proposal of His Majesty's Government as now amended.

5. I then produced a slightly altered version (copy enclosed herein) of paragraphs 6 and 7 of your telegram, together with a translation in Russian which I had had prepared. M. Molotov took it and studied it with close attention.

6. When he had finished perusal, I drew his particular attention to the new provision that Soviet assistance would only be called for in the event of Great Britain and France being involved in hostilities in fulfilment of their obligation, and I stressed the fact that this was only putting down clearly what had always been the intention of His Majesty's Government when they first approached the Soviet Government in the matter of the declaration.

7. M. Molotov enquired whether it was intended to start military conversations. I said that this would depend on the course of events and was provided for in the words 'in such manner and on such terms as might be agreed'. To his question whether it was not intended that military conversations should begin at once, I answered that I thought on the whole such talks were envisaged only as a later development if events called for it; our main idea was that the issue by the Soviet Government of the proposed Declaration would so steady the European situation as not to require any other immediate steps for the moment. M. Molotov said that His Majesty's Government had evidently changed their minds and referred to a declaration made by Sir John Simon in the House of Commons³ (on the 13th April, I afterwards ascertained). On my stating that I could not recall any particular statement (which seemed to astonish M. Molotov) and asking what it amounted to, he answered that Sir John Simon had announced the readiness of His Majesty's Government to enter into military conversations. I said that I did not know either the terms of the statement or the conditions in which it was made; it might have been a personal expression of opinion on a future and hypothetical case, based on a situation as it might have existed at that time. Looking at the proposal at present put forward by His Majesty's Government I thought that the intention was as expressed above. M. Molotov persisted in questioning the attitude of His Majesty's Government to military conversations and I finally said I was sure that, if friendly consideration were given by the Soviet Government to the proposal I was now presenting, His Majesty's Government would be glad to discuss any question arising out of the final line of the suggested declaration.

8. M. Molotov then raised the question of that provocation to Germany which we alleged would arise from any close association of Poland with prospective Soviet assistance. He was surprised at the insistence shown on this point and assured me that the Polish Government no longer held the view attributed to them; they were now much more prepared to consider a closer association with Soviet efforts. I could only say that this was quite contrary to the impression of both the British and French Governments. He

³ See No. 421, note 3.

repeated his previous statement and went on to say that Poland was not referred to at all in Point 1 of the Soviet proposals; did I know whether the Polish Government objected to that point? I said that, taking the proposals as a whole, she was certainly mentioned directly in Point 2 and indirectly therefore in Point 1; whatever formula might be adopted, the fact remained that it was a matter of eventual assistance to Poland. With a pertinacity in questioning which was very marked throughout the interview, M. Molotov said he was asking me whether the Polish Government objected to Point 1 taken singly. I said that the various points had not been considered singly, but as parts of a logical whole. In reply to a further remark that our reply had not alluded to the other separate points of the Soviet proposals I gave the same answer.

9. I was subjected to a series of questions as to what, if any, guarantees His Majesty's Government had given to Holland, Belgium and Switzerland. I answered that I was really not competent to say, as Western Europe was outside my province. Eventually, I said that the Low Countries were, indeed, a vital consideration to the United Kingdom and had always been so throughout history. Pressed as regards Switzerland I said that I knew nothing.

10. Asked whether His Majesty's Government had known, previous to Herr Hitler's speech, of the German intention to denounce the Naval Treaty, I replied in the negative, though, I added, rumours to that effect had, of course, been current previously. To the rather naïve question: 'When did His Majesty's Government first begin to fear German aggression?' I answered that our rearmament had begun after Munich, and our attempts to provide against actual aggression had been brought to birth by the entry of German troops into Prague.

11. M. Molotov said that the Soviet Government had made identic proposals to France and Great Britain and had received two different replies. He wanted to know whether the French Government had approved of the reply given by His Majesty's Government, and *vice versa*. I said that there had been an exchange of views and that both Governments were well aware of their respective attitudes to the problem. That was not his question, he said; to which I answered that, after the two Governments had exchanged views they had agreed that they had no objection to each presenting a reply from their two different angles. Their positions were not identical, as France had her pact with the Soviet Union: and the divergence in the replies only showed the complex nature of the question all three Governments wished to solve. We argued on these lines for some time, and then gave it up after I said that I was for the present only engaged in laying before him what was a most sincerely meant contribution by His Majesty's Government.

12. M. Molotov said that the Soviet Government would carefully consider the amended suggestion of His Majesty's Government. His Government's policy had not changed, but, of course, it was liable to modification if other Governments changed theirs. He said they would not be as dilatory in answering as we had been. I again repeated what I had originally said on

this point, but he begged me to note that the Soviet Government had always replied to us in under three days, as compared with the three weeks we had found necessary. I said that, frankly, I could only take off my hat to the superior efficiency of the Soviet Government, at which he laughed heartily.

13. The interview had lasted exactly one hour.

I have, &c.,

WILLIAM SEEDS

ENCLOSURE IN No. 436

*Copy of Amended Suggestion of His Majesty's Government handed to
M. Molotov, May 8, 1939*

In the task of erecting a barrier against aggression in Eastern Europe by making arrangements for the safety of those States most directly menaced, His Majesty's Government would always attach great importance to the association with their efforts of the Soviet Government. They are, in fact, fully conscious that the support that might be afforded by the Soviet Government to Eastern European countries would be of the utmost value in case of war, and that the prospect of such support would act as a powerful deterrent against aggression. Their whole effort has accordingly been directed to finding means by which certain difficulties inherent in the situation may be avoided or overcome. It was with this purpose that His Majesty's Government proposed that the Soviet Government should of their own volition make a declaration which they are convinced would steady the situation by showing the willingness of the Soviet Government to collaborate without causing immediate difficulties to those whom it is desired to help. By this proposal the Soviet Government would lend their assistance in whatever form seemed most desirable to States, victims of aggression and themselves determined to resist, who wished to take advantage of it. The original proposal made to the Soviet Government was designed for the purpose of giving effect to this idea.

His Majesty's Government have, however, in the light of the Soviet counter-proposal and of their consultations with other Governments, revised the proposal which they originally made to the Soviet Government, and they would now submit it in the following form:—

'It is suggested that the Soviet Government should make a public declaration on their own initiative, in which after referring to the general statement of policy recently made by M. Stalin and having regard to the statements recently made by His Majesty's Government and the French Government, accepting new obligations on behalf of certain Eastern European countries, the Soviet Government would undertake that in the event of Great Britain and France being involved in hostilities in fulfilment of these obligations, the assistance of the Soviet Government would be immediately available if desired and would be afforded in such manner and on such terms as might be agreed.'

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 10)
No. 608 [C 6865/15/18]

PARIS, May 9, 1939

His Majesty's Ambassador at Paris presents his compliments to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and has the honour to transmit to him a copy of a memorandum by the Air Attaché concerning the general European situation.

ENCLOSURE IN No. 437

PARIS, May 8, 1939

H.B.M. Ambassador,
Paris.

On 6th May I had a conversation with Colonel de Vitrolles in which he spoke of the general European situation. He said that from his information regarding the German imports of raw materials, he was sure that Germany was not yet ready for war. He therefore felt certain that in the Danzig question she would not take any brusque action but would continue to negotiate with Poland.

As regards Poland herself, she was naturally very nervous regarding Russia. The idea of help from Russia was almost as terrifying to her as would be help from Germany, for she realised quite clearly that to have the troops of either of these countries in her territory would mean that she would never get rid of them again and that a new Partition would be her fate, irrespective of the result of a war.

On the other hand, help from Russian aviation would be of great value to the Western Powers in a war with Germany. But Russian aircraft had not the range to operate except from Polish aerodromes. He thought therefore that it was essential that the number of Polish aerodromes should be increased to as large an extent as possible, both for our own use and also for the possible use of Russian aircraft, though this latter point should not be stressed with the Poles.

There was much to be said for French and possibly British aircraft operating from Polish aerodromes against Germany, but this would be at present impossible as Poland was very badly equipped with aerodromes. The French were urging them to increase the number largely and Colonel de Vitrolles suggested that we might do the same thing. The country south of Warsaw was very suitable for the construction of aerodromes and the road communication in this area was not at all bad.

Turning to Italy, he said that he thought that relations between the Governments of Italy and Germany were undoubtedly strained at the moment and that Italy was very unwilling to be drawn into a war. Hence the visits of the German statesmen and generals to Italy to try to brace the Axis.

But it was not only externally that Italy was in difficulties. Her people were beginning to show their dissatisfaction with their own Government. He had certain information that a number of reservists recently called up for service had departed singing the 'Internationale'.

When I asked him whether he thought that the time for a *rapprochement* between France and Italy had come, he said that he thought that the moment was not yet ripe.

DOUGLAS COLYER
Wing Commander, Air Attaché

No. 438

Mr. Osborne (The Vatican) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 15)
No. 82 [R 4019/6/22]

THE VATICAN, May 9, 1939

My Lord,

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your despatch No. 27¹ of May 5 on the subject of the Pope's contemplated peace initiative. I fully realise the difficulties and embarrassments involved for His Majesty's Government, and also probably for the other Governments concerned, but I earnestly trust that every endeavour may be made to avoid any impression that objections or obstacles to the proposed meeting are being raised from London. The view was expressed to me at the Vatican that President Roosevelt's recent initiative had been a little tactless in that it had put the two Dictators in the dock as the potential disturbers of the peace, even though this was admittedly where they belonged. It would be very regrettable if we, with or without the French Government, were in the present case to appear to be reluctant to sit down at a table to discuss means of solving problems threatening peace.

2. As regards the two principal difficulties referred to in paragraph 3 of your telegram No. 172 Saving to Paris² of May 6, repeated to me as No. 12, the second, namely the possible objection of the French Government to allow German participation in discussion of their differences with Italy, is apparently obviated by the reluctance of Signor Mussolini, reported in my telegram No. 23,³ to see the Italian claims against Italy (*sic* ? France)⁴ quoted in the Pope's proposed Message as an issue threatening peace. Presumably he will have his way, in which case the Message will only mention the differences between Germany and Poland. I should not imagine that His Majesty's Government or the French Government could have any objection to a round-table discussion of these questions and I should hope that we might persuade the Polish Government similarly to accept. I have not yet heard what, if any, reply has been received from Warsaw, but I am sure that the Vatican are exercising all their influence there in favour of acceptance. Assuming a favourable Polish reply, there only remains the

¹ No. 385.

² No. 399.

³ No. 404.

⁴ This suggested emendation was made in the Foreign Office.

other major difficulties referred to in your telegram No. 12 to me, namely, Herr Hitler's aversion from conferences. If Herr Hitler should reject the Pope's proposals, he will this time have gratuitously advertised himself as opposed to the composition of disputes by discussion and conciliation and will have to bear the burden of rejection of His Holiness' proposals. But, as I reported in my telegram No. 23, he informed the Vatican that he wished to consult with Signor Mussolini before returning a definite reply and I should expect the latter, who has expressed himself favourably towards the Pope's proposed action, to urge acceptance by Germany. However, Signor Mussolini's influence on Herr Hitler is unfortunately an incalculable factor.

3. Whatever the developments may be I should like to emphasise that the Pope has not the slightest idea of any direct or indirect participation in the round-table meeting which he will advocate and there is no question of its taking place on Vatican territory; His Holiness is solely concerned to urge the Powers immediately concerned in an issue threatening European peace to meet for the purpose of discussion and negotiation of a peaceful and equitable solution.

4. I have sent a copy of this despatch to His Majesty's Ambassador at the Quirinal.

I have, &c.,
D. G. OSBORNE

No. 439

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw)

No. 152 Telegraphic [C 6457/54/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 10, 1939, 12.30 a.m.

My immediately preceding telegram.¹

You should at the same time discuss with M. Beck the possibility foreshadowed in paragraph 6 of my telegram No. 137² and say that we should be glad to have his views on the manner in which such a threat might develop and the steps which the Polish Government would contemplate taking to avert or counter it.

Repeated to Berlin and Paris.

¹ No. 442. These telegrams were despatched in reverse order.

² No. 346.

No. 440

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax
(Received May 10, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 204 Telegraphic [R 3807/661/67]

ANGORA, May 10, 1939, 12.30 a.m.

My telegrams Nos. 192¹ and 193.²

Secretary-General called on me late on May 9 to tell me that Roumanian Ambassador had informed the Minister for Foreign Affairs that Yugoslav

¹ No. 391.

² No. 393.

Minister for Foreign Affairs had summoned Roumanian Ambassador in Belgrade and stated that decision of Turkish Government to make Declaration would have serious consequences and was contrary to understanding reached at Bucharest in February whereby Balkan allies undertook to join no outside combination without common consent.³ If Declaration were made Yugoslav Government might be compelled to take a grave decision but Yugoslav Minister for Foreign Affairs would like to discuss matter first with M. Gafencu.

2. M. Gafencu had already replied begging Yugoslav Minister for Foreign Affairs to take no decision until his return from Rome when M. Gafencu would be ready to have a meeting with him.

3. Roumanian Ambassador here was instructed to inform Turkish Government of this and to add that M. Gafencu agrees with and approves attitude taken up by Turkish Government.

M. Gafencu considers however that in either of two possible events, war or an international conference (and his European visits inclined him to consider the latter the more probable), it is important that Balkan Entente should display solidarity. He therefore suggested declaration proposed by Turkish Government should be couched in a form which involved no threat to solidarity of the Balkan Entente.

4. Secretary-General concludes 'grave decision' threatened by Yugoslav Government would take the form of joining Axis Powers. As regards supposed agreement at Bucharest (see paragraph 1) he states that undertaking referred only to adherence of any member of Balkan Entente to an ideological group and does not affect present issue. He tells me that it had been pointed out to Roumanian Ambassador here that Declaration as drafted involved no threat to solidarity of Balkan Entente. Secretary-General added that Turkish Government thought that the sooner Declaration was made the better.

5. Before events recorded above took place Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs had received message that owing to pressure of work at Bucharest Roumanian Minister for Foreign Affairs desired to postpone his visit here from May 17 to June 5.

Repeated to Paris, Athens, Belgrade, Bucharest and Sofia.

³ The Council of the Balkan Entente met at Bucharest on February 20. No decision such as that reported above was published, but it was understood in the Foreign Office that it had been decided to prolong the pact for 7 or 8 years from 1940; and it was thought probable that an agreement not to join ideological groups had also been reached. See also No. 602.

No. 441

Sir W. Seeds (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 10, 8.45 a.m.)

No. 89 Telegraphic [C 6856/3356/18]

MOSCOW, May 9,¹ 1939, 12.40 a.m.

Following is text of Tass communiqué issued late this evening: According to information from London, Reuter reported by wireless that British answer

¹ This date should presumably read 'May 10': but the telegram was evidently drafted on May 9.

to Soviet proposals contains following fundamental counter-proposals: (1) Soviet Union must give guarantees to each border State. (2) England undertakes to help Soviet Union if latter is involved in war as result of fulfilling its guarantee. On basis of information received from authoritative Soviet circles Tass is able to state that this communication of Reuter's does not entirely correspond to reality. Soviet Government actually received on May 8 counter-proposals of English Government to which French Government does not object. In these suggestions it is not stated that Soviet Government must guarantee each State bordering on Union of Soviet Socialist Republics individually. It is there stated that Soviet Government must give immediate help to Great Britain and France in case latter are involved in military operations in execution of obligations assumed by them with regard to Poland and Roumania. However in these counter-proposals English Government does not say anything about any help which Soviet Union must receive from France and Great Britain on basis of reciprocity if Soviet Union is similarly involved in military operations in execution of its obligations with regard to these States in Eastern Europe. Ends.

No. 442

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw)
No. 151 Telegraphic [C 6457/54/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 10, 1939, 12.45 a.m.

1. We have to be prepared for the possibility of action by Danzig Senate or Popular Assembly in direction of union with German Reich. If Danzig merely expresses desire to be united with Reich and takes no positive steps to this end, present position would presumably not be greatly altered. Incidentally Danzig is of course not able legally to alter status of Free City or Treaty settlement by unilateral declaration.

2. But if Danzig declares its union with Germany and takes whatever practical steps are necessary to make it effective in collaboration with the German Government but without German troops entering Danzig, will not Poland be placed in a dilemma? If she occupies Danzig she will be made to appear in German eyes and indeed in the eyes of many non-Germans as having started the recourse to force. If she does not intervene she is faced with a *fait accompli*. It may be that Poland could use the economic weapon by deflecting Polish trade from Danzig. In certain circumstances it would seem that this might be the best tactics.

3. It is essential that I should have some indication of the Polish attitude in event of such a situation arising which would be intermediate between a mere expression by Danzig of a desire for union with Germany and a German military occupation of the Free City. Please discuss with Colonel Beck and endeavour to elicit his views as fully and as soon as possible.

4. You will realise, as I am sure he does, that it is important that Poland

should take no step which will give Germany an excuse for putting her in the wrong with general world opinion.

Repeated to Berlin, Paris and Danzig.

No. 443

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax
(Received May 10, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 205 Telegraphic [R 3796/661/67]

ANGORA, May 10, 1939, 2.51 a.m.

Your telegram No. 161.¹

1. Omission of the words in paragraph 3 of proposed Declaration 'leading to war' from the French version given in my telegram No. 193² was due to cyphering error which is regretted. The words: 'qui conduirait à une guerre' should be added after 'agression'.

2. The words in paragraph 4 after 'envisagé' are 'n'est dirigé'. Apart from the change of tense, there is no departure from the original English text and the version given in your telegram under reference is accurate.

3. I will telegraph regarding suggested addition to paragraph as soon as possible.

Repeated to Athens, Belgrade, Bucharest and Sofia.

¹ No. 423.

² No. 393.

No. 444

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax
(Received May 10, 9.40 a.m.)

No. 206 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 3797/661/67]

ANGORA, May 10, 1939

Your telegram No. 161,¹ paragraph 2.

Turkish Government agree to inclusion of new paragraph 6 regarding Balkans.

2. Other points are covered by my telegram No. 205² which shows that we are in agreement regarding rest of Declaration.

3. They are prepared to make Declaration today between 2 and 4 p.m. British summer time.

Please inform me urgently whether you agree.

Repeated to Athens, Sofia, Belgrade and Bucharest.

¹ No. 423.

² No. 443.

No. 445

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax
(Received May 10, 2.15 p.m.)

No. 207 Telegraphic [R 3843/661/67]

ANGORA, May 10, 1939, 10.46 a.m.

My telegrams Nos. 205¹ and 206.²

To avoid all doubt I should add that Minister for Foreign Affairs agrees that assumption in first paragraph of your telegram No. 161³ regarding paragraph 2 is correct.

¹ No. 443.

² No. 444.

³ No. 423.

No. 446

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 10, 11.35 a.m.)

No. 200A Telegraphic: by telephone [R 4021/661/67]

PARIS, May 10, 1939

Your telegram No. 193.¹

I am sending by air mail bag, due at Croydon at 1.55 p.m. today, copy of memorandum which I have just received from French Government.²

2. Briefly, French Government agree to procedure proposed by His Majesty's Government, and to the (? terms of)³ proposed Declaration, but they consider it *essential* that Declaration should be tripartite, the question whether subsequent arrangements should have a bilateral character being reserved.

Repeated to Angora.

¹ No. 405.

² See No. 471.

³ The text is here uncertain.

No. 447

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora)

No. 164 Telegraphic [R 3797/661/67]

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 10, 1939, 12.30 p.m.

Your telegram No. 206.¹

Please tell Minister for Foreign Affairs how greatly I appreciate the promptitude with which he has met our views, and how gratified I am that our two Governments should have found it so easy to reach an agreement on so important a matter. For various reasons of a Parliamentary nature, it will, I regret to say, be impossible for His Majesty's Government to make an announcement of the Declaration today. I will, however, telegraph again as soon as possible suggesting a day and hour on which a simultaneous announcement might be made in Angora and London. I trust that His Excellency will not be upset by this slight delay. If you think it would help

¹ No. 444.

matters you might intimate to him that the interval can be used for devising means for associating the French Government with the Declaration.

Repeated to Athens, Sofia, Belgrade and Bucharest.

No. 448

Sir P. Loraine (Rome) to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)

No. 46¹ Telegraphic [C 6867/54/18]

ROME, May 10, 1939, 1.50 p.m.

Foreign Office telegram No. 150 to you.²

As Secretary of State leaves you some latitude in second paragraph I should be glad to know at your earliest convenience whether you have acted or whether you intend to act in full sense of his instructions. For I wish to conform my language here precisely to what is said in Berlin.

Repeated to Foreign Office.

¹ This telegram was addressed to Berlin as telegram No. 46, and repeated as No. 450 to the Foreign Office, where it was received on May 10 at 3.30 p.m.

² No. 431.

No. 449

Mr. Snow (Helsingfors) to Viscount Halifax

(Received May 10, 2.50 p.m.)

No. 46 Telegraphic [N 2391/64/63]

HELSINGFORS, May 10, 1939, 2.30 p.m.

My telegrams Nos. 41, 43 and 44¹ last paragraph.

1. Minister for Foreign Affairs returned from Stockholm last night and I saw him by appointment this morning. In reply to a question he said that the attitude of the Finnish Government to the German offer of a non-aggression . . .² would depend on two factors. First was, that Finland received no guarantee from Russia in any shape or form.

2. If this could be secured he could assure me that Finland, Sweden and Norway would all reject German offer.

3. There was also a 'small' chance that in that case Denmark might reject.

4. If on the other hand Soviet guarantee materialised it would, in spite of the qualification that it would only operate 'if desired', be regarded as a menace by all sections of Finnish opinion and the Minister for Foreign Affairs would be powerless to oppose pressure to accept German offer.

5. In reply to representations on my part that no guarantee to Finland by name was contemplated the Minister for Foreign Affairs said that this was not enough: they desired to be definitely excluded from 'Roumania, Poland

¹ Not printed. These telegrams referred to the German offer of a non-aggression pact and also to Mr. Snow's previous statements that the Finnish Government would be unlikely to desire Soviet assistance.

² The text is here uncertain but should presumably read 'pact'.

and all that'. They were only asking in fact to be treated as a member of the Nordic group to which they actually belonged, not as a member of some other group.

6. Minister for Foreign Affairs also referred to resentment which had been caused by suspicions that His Majesty's Government and Soviet Government had discussed the grant of Soviet guarantee embracing Finland but had not thought it worth while to consult Finland in the matter first.

7. I repeated to the Minister for Foreign Affairs in words of paragraph 2 assurance he had given me and asked if he definitely confirmed it and would authorise me so to inform His Majesty's Government. Minister for Foreign Affairs gave me friendly and completely definite yes to both questions.

8. Continued in my immediately following telegram.³

Repeated to Moscow, Copenhagen, Oslo and Stockholm.

³ Not printed. This telegram referred to the negotiations over the Finnish-Swedish agreement for the fortification of the Aaland Islands, which was about to be presented to the Council of the League of Nations.

No. 450

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)

No. 195 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 3797/661/67]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 10, 1939, 3.15 p.m.*

My telegram to Angora No. 161.¹

Turkish Government have agreed to our suggestions and final English text of Declaration was handed to M. Cambon this morning.

M. Cambon repeated the desire of the French Government that the Declaration should take a tripartite form. He was told of our objection to this on the grounds that it might give an undue impression of organised encirclement. He was also told that it was considered most important to announce the Declaration by Friday² at latest, and it was suggested to him that the French Government should at once get in touch with the Turkish Government with a view to examining how their association with the Declaration could best be arranged.

Repeated to Angora.

¹ No. 423.

² May 12.

No. 451

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)

No. 196 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 3797/661/67]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 10, 3.30 p.m.*

Following is text referred to in my immediately preceding telegram.¹

¹ No. 450.

Begins:

1. His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom and the Turkish Government have entered into close consultation, and the discussions which have taken place between them and which are still continuing have revealed their customary identity of view.

2. It is agreed that the two countries will conclude a definitive long-term agreement of a reciprocal character in the interest of their national security.

3. Pending the completion of the definitive agreement, His Majesty's Government and the Turkish Government declare that in the event of an act of aggression leading to war in the Mediterranean area they would be prepared to co-operate effectively and to lend each other all aid and assistance in their power.

4. This Declaration, like the proposed agreement, is not directed against any country but is designed to assure Great Britain and Turkey of mutual aid and assistance should the necessity arise.

5. It is recognised by the two Governments that certain matters, including the more precise definition of the various conditions which would bring the reciprocal engagements into operation, will require closer examination before the definitive agreement can be completed. This examination is proceeding.

6. The two Governments recognise that it is also necessary to ensure the establishment of security in the Balkans and they are consulting together with the object of achieving this purpose as speedily as possible.

7. It is understood that the arrangements above mentioned do not preclude either Government from making agreements with other countries in the general interest of the consolidation of peace. Ends.

No. 452

*Sir P. Loraine (Rome) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 10, 5.0 p.m.)
No. 452 Telegraphic [C 6871/54/18]*

ROME, May 10, 1939, 3.40 p.m.

Your telegram No. 239.¹

I have applied for my interview on first arrival with Signor Mussolini and may be given an appointment at any moment.

2. I think it far better to use that opportunity to tell him, as such, the full and exact sense of your instructions to Sir N. Henderson.

3. In my opinion he would prefer this course and is more likely to react usefully if approached directly than if he heard of Sir N. Henderson's communication through other channels. I propose to say that you think it owing to Italian Government that position of His Majesty's Government should be made as plain to him as to German authorities.

4. I shall act on foregoing lines unless other instructions reach me in time. Repeated to Berlin.

¹ No. 432.

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora)

No. 167 Telegraphic [R 3807/661/67]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 10, 1939, 6.20 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 204.¹

The attitude of the Yugoslav Minister for Foreign Affairs is disquieting and I hope M. Saracoglu will do his utmost to allay the apprehensions of the Yugoslav Government. I had naturally assumed that the Turkish Government in negotiating this declaration were acting throughout in accord with their fellow members of the Balkan Entente and it comes as somewhat of a surprise that at the eleventh hour there should be this apparent hitch. If there is anything that His Majesty's Government can do to help in this difficulty, whether it be in Belgrade, Athens or Bucharest, I trust His Excellency will let me know what language I could most appropriately use to second his efforts.

2. You may assure the Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs that if any change of wording in the Declaration would help to meet the point in the last sentence of paragraph 3 of your telegram under reference I would naturally be prepared to consider it, since it seems to me of great importance that nothing should be done which would have the effect of weakening the solidarity of the Balkan Entente.

Repeated to Paris, Athens, Belgrade and Bucharest.

¹ No. 440.

No. 454

Mr. Osborne (The Vatican) to Viscount Halifax

(Received May 10, 10.0 p.m.)

No. 27 Telegraphic [R 3862/6/22]

THE VATICAN, *May 10, 1939, 7.35 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 12.¹

I am now informed at the Vatican that the Pope does not intend to proceed at present with this project although he may revert to it later should he consider the risk of war to be imminent. No message will therefore be now sent. This decision is chiefly due to fact that he has received assurances from both Herr Hitler and Signor Mussolini that there is no immediate menace of war arising out of German-Polish and Franco-Italian differences. I understand that he has however made it clear that he will take action on lines contemplated if he should consider future circumstances require it.

News of project leaked at Paris and in reply to journalist's pertinent enquiries Under-Secretary of State stated yesterday:

(1) That the Pope always had done and always would do anything in his power on behalf of peace and

¹ No. 399 was repeated to the Vatican as telegram No. 12.

(2) That he had not proposed any conference at the Vatican.

I trust that no other information will be given to British press.

Lest the Vatican should have been disappointed by His Majesty's Government preliminary reception of the Pope's proposal, I took the opportunity of reiterating expressions of appreciation of His Holiness' motives and initiative.

No. 455

Viscount Halifax to Sir P. Loraine (Rome)

No. 240 Telegraphic [C 6871/54/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 10, 1939, 8.10 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 452.¹

You should take no action on your suggestion unless you receive further instructions from me.²

Repeated to Berlin.

¹ No. 452.

² For the further instructions see No. 477.

No. 456

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax

(Received May 11, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 209 Telegraphic [R 3864/661/67]

ANGORA, *May 10, 1939, 8.30 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 144.¹

I have now received oral communication² giving reply of Turkish Government on other points in your telegram, apart from proposed Declaration which is covered separately in my telegram No. 206,³ &c.

2. Communication expresses gratification that general agreement exists on fundamental points. Harmony of views which the Minister for Foreign Affairs considers he can indicate below, enables him to state that procedure by four stages suggested in your telegram No. 144 is accepted.

3. Communication then deals with the following points in your telegram No. 144.

4. *Point 1.* The Minister for Foreign Affairs confirms that 'last named Power' refers to Italy (see second paragraph of my telegram No 180⁴). He suggests cancelling the words 'last named'.

5. *Point 2.* The Minister for Foreign Affairs understands reasons for which His Majesty's Government prefer the original text without the addition proposed by the Turkish Government. The Minister for Foreign Affairs considers 'during conversations regarding elaboration of the definitive agreement

¹ No. 310.

² For the text of this communication see enclosure in No. 517.

³ No. 444.

⁴ No. 332.

this question can usefully be threshed out and that it will probably not be difficult to give it a form satisfactory to the two parties'.

6. *Point 3.* The Minister for Foreign Affairs has taken act⁵ of your statement on the question of Anglo-Soviet assistance. He continues to hope that an arrangement will take place in the predominant interests of peace.

7. *Point 4.* Complete agreement.

8. *Point 5.* While noting that agreement exists between the two Governments, the Minister for Foreign Affairs wishes to draw attention to the fact [that] 'he does not interpret final sentence of Point 5 of the British communication as constituting a reservation'. (This refers to the last sentence of paragraph 6 of your telegram No. 144.)

9. *Point 6.* Communication states, as has already been stated above, that Turkish Government is in agreement with regard to the adoption of procedure suggested by His Majesty's Government. This disposes of objections raised in Point 6 in the sense desired by His Majesty's Government.

Repeated to Athens, Belgrade, Bucharest and Sofia.

⁵ A pencilled emendation on the file copy of this telegram reads: '? note'.

No. 457

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax
(Received May 10, 8.45 p.m.)
No. 152 Telegraphic [N 2405/2306/38]

WARSAW, May 10, 1939, 8.50 p.m.

My telegram No. 149.¹

M. Beck informs me that he saw M. Potemkin today before his departure for Moscow. M. Potemkin asked for an explanation regarding Polish reservations in connexion with the conversations between Soviet, French and British Governments. M. Beck had told him that he had of course nothing to say about any conversations between U.S.S.R., Great Britain and France, but that as regards Poland it was essential for him not to adopt an attitude which might lead to serious repercussions with her other neighbours.

2. On the other hand he had assured M. Potemkin that Poland had not and would not participate in any plot of an anti-Soviet description. He was also glad to be able to confirm that relations between Soviet and Poland were entirely satisfactory and that Poland would not be indifferent to the attitude which Soviet Government would adopt in the event of any European conflagration.

3. M. Potemkin had expressed himself as satisfied with these assurances and conversation had ended on a cordial note.

Repeated to Moscow.

¹ No. 427.

No. 458

*Sir R. Hoare (Bucharest) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 10, 9.0 p.m.)
No. 201 Telegraphic [R 3850/661/67]*

BUCHAREST, May 10, 1939, 8.50 p.m.

Angora telegram No. 204.¹

Generally speaking Minister for Foreign Affairs confirms this information. He is informing Roumanian Minister in London of subsequent developments which appear to be satisfactory.

Repeated to Angora, Belgrade, Athens and Sofia.

¹ No. 440.

No. 459

*Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 11, 9.0 a.m.)
No. 151 Telegraphic [C 6910/54/18]*

WARSAW, May 10, 1939, 8.59 p.m.

Your telegrams Nos. 151¹ and 152.²

I put these considerations before Minister for Foreign Affairs today. M. Beck fully shares your preoccupation and states that he has given full reflexion to possible developments in connexion with Danzig. He feels that any isolated action by the Senate is not probable. The Reich would have to adopt some attitude towards any such action and it is on the Reich's attitude that Polish Government would have to base their own. He said it should be remembered that Danzig forms part of Polish customs territory, that there is a company of Polish troops on the Westerplatte, that railways are Polish property. Consequently if Danzig authorities, as a result of any desire to obtain union with the Reich, took any action against Polish interests or persons, Polish Government would have to react in an energetic manner. This would be proportionate to the action taken either by Danzig authorities or the Reich.

2. M. Beck had told German Ambassador in March that Polish Government would consider any military action of the Reich in Danzig as an act of aggression and that any unilateral action by Danzig authorities to attain union with the Reich would lead to an appropriate reaction on the part of the Polish Government.

3. M. Beck appreciated just as fully as Your Lordship the necessity of not taking any step which might appear to be provocative and Polish Government had no intention of intervening a moment too soon but also not a moment too late.

He promised to inform me immediately of any development which might necessitate action on the part of the Polish Government but he could not at this moment state what definite action Polish Government would take in any

¹ No. 442.

² No. 439.

hypothetical case until he was aware of how this case was likely to present itself.

4. He repeated that Your Lordship could be assured that Polish Government would fully weigh the consequences of any action they might feel it necessary to take and would not blindly precipitate a crisis which might lead to war.

Repeated to Berlin and Danzig.

No. 460

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora)
No. 169 Telegraphic [R 3797/661/67]

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 10, 1939, 9.0 p.m.

My telegram No. 164.¹

1. The French Government attach the utmost importance to being associated in a tripartite declaration, and I feel that there is considerable force in their argument that, if separate declarations are made by His Majesty's Government and the French Government, it will be misinterpreted as a sign that the two Governments are not in complete accord and this fact will be exploited by the Axis Powers. I should be very glad therefore, if Turkish Government could see their way to agree to amend the present text so as to include the French Government. This will involve textual alterations given in my immediately succeeding telegram.²

2. This decision has been taken subsequently to my telegram to Paris No. 195.³

3. If Turkish Government agree to this alteration, as I sincerely hope they will, His Majesty's Government will be prepared to announce the terms of the declaration in Parliament on Friday morning.

4. If you think it would be of use you may say that I spoke frankly to French Ambassador this afternoon on matters raised in your telegram No. 202.⁴ I told Ambassador that, without, naturally expressing any opinion about the merits of particular causes of difference, His Majesty's Government must view with profound regret any unnecessary misunderstanding between Turkey and France.

Repeated to Paris.

¹ No. 447.

² No. 461.

³ No. 450.

⁴ No. 415.

No. 461

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora)
No. 170 Telegraphic [R 3797/661/67]

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 10, 1939, 10.0 p.m.

My telegram No. 169.¹

The following are the alterations in the Declaration which would be required to convert it from a bipartite into a tripartite form:

¹ No. 460.

Paragraph 1 insert the words 'the French Government' between 'United Kingdom' and 'and'. Add a comma after the word 'Kingdom'.

Paragraph 2 alter 'two' to 'three'.

Paragraph 3 add comma after 'His Majesty's Government' and insert the words 'the French Government' after the words 'His Majesty's Government'.

Paragraph 4 add comma after 'Great Britain' and insert the word 'France' after 'Great Britain'.

Paragraphs 5 and 6 alter 'two' to 'three'.

Paragraph 7 alter 'either' to 'any of the three'.

Repeated to Paris.

No. 462

Sir P. Loraine (Rome) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 11, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 455 Telegraphic [R 3872/661/67]

ROME, May 10, 1939, 11.55 p.m.

Your telegram No. 236.¹

It is certainly possible that bipartite Declarations would be regarded in Rome as less provocative than a tripartite Declaration. But as the Western Powers are accused here every day of organising a policy of encirclement of Germany and Italy, I doubt whether the first would be appreciably less unpalatable to the Italian Government than the second.

2. Taking it that the object of proposed Declaration is to act as a deterrent, and, if such deterrent fails in its purpose, to oppose aggression with maximum force, unity and efficiency on the part of States who feel themselves threatened, I suggest respectfully that the matter should be judged by this criterion.

3. Italian objections in the past have been to Italian association with multilateral combinations: not so far as I know to conclusion of multilateral agreements with which their association is not sought. Moreover if Italian and German Governments wished to convert their new alliance into a triple alliance by inclusion of Japan I can hardly think it likely that they would consider our feelings in the matter.

4. Wholeheartedly as I share your desire and that of the Prime Minister for development of happier and closer relations with Italy, I do not think that the object can be obtained by minor concessions (which are unlikely to be required) in matters of major interest to our own policy.

5. One other consideration. If Italian Government do happen to be looking for a pretext to denounce Anglo-Italian Agreement, of which we certainly have no present indication here, the one would serve as well as the other.

Repeated to Angora and Paris.

¹ No. 425.

No. 463

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)

No. 187 Saving: Telegraphic [R 3797/661/67]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 10, 1939*

Your telegram No. 200A¹ and your despatch No. 615.²

You will see from my telegram No. 169 to Angora³ that I am doing my best to arrange with Turkish Government that Declaration should be in tripartite form that French Government desires. It will however, be necessary to publish on Friday next and French Government will therefore appreciate that if Turkish Government, for whatever reason, raise objections, the announcement will have to be in bipartite form. Further delay is in our opinion dangerous owing to the opportunity which it would give for German and Italian intrigues at Angora.

It is possible that Turkish Government may make difficulties on account of the strong feelings referred to in Angora telegram No. 202.⁴ I hope, therefore, that French Government for their part will do their best to allay the irritation which evidently exists in regard to the Hatay question (see also my telegram No. 188 Saving to Paris⁵).

Repeated to Angora.

¹ No. 446.

² No. 471.

³ No. 460.

⁴ No. 415.

⁵ No. 464.

No. 464

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)

No. 188 Saving: Telegraphic [R 3797/661/67]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 10, 1939*

Angora telegram No. 202.¹

I spoke rather frankly to French Ambassador this afternoon on matters raised in above-mentioned telegram. I told Ambassador that, without naturally expressing any opinion about the merits of particular causes of difference, His Majesty's Government must view with profound regret any unnecessary misunderstanding between Turkey and France. I understood from the Ambassador, who appeared to be much alive to the undesirability of allowing situation as described in Angora telegram No. 202 to continue, that French Government had it in mind to take steps to remove some at least of causes of complaint existing in eyes of Turkish Government.

Repeated to Angora.

¹ No. 415.

No. 465

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 11)

No. 270 Saving: Telegraphic [R 3847/6/22]

PARIS, May 10, 1939

The French press of May 10 gives great prominence to reports that the Pope wishes to use his influence for the maintenance of peace. The Vatican, it is stated, has denied that a definite proposal has been made for a five-Power conference, but it is believed that soundings were taken on these lines.

2. The Pope is considered to be inspired by the highest of motives; and his influence in favour of peace is generally welcomed, and especially by newspapers of the Right. On the Right and Centre it is felt that conciliatory influence by the Vatican as regards Danzig might be useful. But the idea of a five-Power conference finds favour in hardly any quarter. The semi-official 'Petit Parisien' says that the difficulty of the suggestion is great, and it is generally pointed out that it might cut across both President Roosevelt's proposal, and the attempt to form a *bloc* of peaceful nations which would include Russia. The 'Populaire' (Socialist) offers reasoned criticisms on these lines. The 'Peuple' (Trade Unionist) and 'Humanité' (Communist) go further and scent an attempt at a new Munich.

Copy sent to Vatican.

No. 466

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 11)

No. 275 Saving: Telegraphic [C 6870/3356/18]

PARIS, May 10, 1939

The United States Ambassador tells me that he hears from a Russian source that has hitherto proved reliable that there is little or no chance of the Soviets accepting the proposals of His Majesty's Government.

From the same source His Excellency learns that the shunting of M. Litvinov does not in the least imply the intention of the Soviets to isolate themselves from Europe and still less to flirt with Hitler. It seems likely that the Russian Foreign Service may gradually be purged of its Jewish elements.

Mr. Bullitt, who knows M. Litvinov and M. Molotov, thinks that we can only have gained by the change. The latter in any case has the advantage of being a pure Russian.

No. 467

Sir E. Monson (Stockholm) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 11)

No. 25 Saving: Telegraphic [N 2414/64/63]

STOCKHOLM, May 10, 1939

The meeting of the four Scandinavian Foreign Ministers at Stockholm on May 9 to discuss their attitude towards the German overtures regarding

non-aggression pacts terminated on the evening of that day. After the meeting the following communiqué was issued:

‘The Scandinavian Foreign Ministers, in the course of their deliberations, first of all noted that the Scandinavian countries firmly adhere to the Declaration made after their meeting at Oslo last year¹ that those countries, now as before, desire to keep aloof from those groups of Powers which may be formed in Europe and that, in the event of a war between them, they will do all they can to avoid being drawn into it. From this basis they have considered the desirability of their countries, individually or collectively, becoming parties to a more or less extensive system of non-aggression pacts. In this regard they have exchanged information as well as the views held in the four Ministries for Foreign Affairs. The result of their deliberations will be submitted to the Governments.

‘The Foreign Ministers are agreed that the attitude towards international affairs which their countries, by a self determined and consistent policy, have shown that they mean to adopt, and which they intend to maintain, debars them from being ‘objects’ (*objekter*) in any political combination of Powers. They unitedly welcome manifestations of the intention of other States to respect the integrity and independence of the Scandinavian countries. A corresponding attitude on the part of the latter countries in their relations to other States is an obvious consequence of their entire policy. After their conference the Foreign Ministers are convinced that the replies which, after the decision to be taken by each of the countries, may be given to questions regarding their attitude to pacts of the nature in question will in all quarters conduce to strengthen confidence in the disinterested policy of neutrality which the Scandinavian countries are maintaining in virtue of their right of self-determination.’

¹ On April 6, 1938.

No. 468

Minute by Mr. Strang

[C 6924/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 10, 1939*

On the Secretary of State's instructions I telephoned to the Soviet Ambassador this afternoon, just before 3.30, to say that in view of the communiqué¹ which had been issued in Moscow last night and published in the press this morning about the British proposals, the Prime Minister was making a statement in the House of Commons this afternoon about the conversations which had been going on between the two Governments. The statement would be made about 4 o'clock, and it would only be in general terms.²

Lord Halifax also wished me to say that if the Soviet Ambassador wished to see him about any point arising out of this statement, he was of course at his disposal.

¹ See No. 441.

² See Parl. Deb., 5th ser., H. of C., vol. 347, cols. 453-6.

The Soviet Ambassador asked whether we should be giving an account of the Soviet proposals. I said that there was, I thought, a reference to them, but only in general terms.

W. STRANG

No. 469

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)

No. 1160 [R 3874/661/67]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 10, 1939*

Sir,

The French Ambassador called on me this afternoon, and I spoke to him about the question whether the Turkish Agreement should be tripartite or bipartite. I told M. Corbin that we were disposed to favour a bipartite Agreement, as being less likely to appear to constitute encirclement, but the Ambassador told me that his Government attached great importance to the tripartite form.

2. I then spoke to M. Corbin on the lines of Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen's telegram No. 202¹ of the 8th May about the Hatay negotiations. The Ambassador indicated that there had been some misunderstanding in Turkey of the French point of view, and gave me to understand that the French Government were taking further action to resolve this misunderstanding, though M. Corbin suggested that there might have been some element of bargaining in the attitude which the Turkish Government had adopted.

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

¹ No. 415.

No. 470

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)

No. 1162 [C 6905/15/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 10, 1939*

Sir,

M. Blum¹ called to see me today at the Foreign Office, and we had half an hour's conversation on general subjects. He began by telling me of the visit he had recently paid to Sweden and of the discussions he had there had with different representatives from the Scandinavian countries. He had found them all very optimistic, much more so indeed than he himself was disposed to be. His own view was that, provided France and Great Britain pursued a policy of absolute firmness, war would be averted, but any appearance of vacillation or irresolution was in the last degree dangerous.

2. M. Blum told me that he had discussed with members of the Swedish

¹ M. Blum was in London on a private visit.

Government what might be the attitude of Sweden in regard to supplies of iron ore to Germany in the event of war. According to his account, the Swedes were very willing to consider the possibility of adopting an attitude of strict neutrality, by which they would debar themselves from supplying such raw material to belligerents. M. Blum's view was that we might reach a more satisfactory agreement along this line by persuasion than by any attempt to adopt firmer methods of blockade or the like.

3. We had a short discussion also on Spain, and I repeated to M. Blum what I had said to M. Corbin in regard to the desirability of the French Government giving no cause to General Franco for saying that they were not implementing the Bérard Agreement.² M. Blum told me that the view that I was putting was the same as that expressed to the French Government by General Pétain, and that he personally agreed with it.

4. He asked me before he left whether I could tell him anything about Russia, and I told him that I hoped part of the difficulty had been in the nature of a misunderstanding in the mind of the Soviet Government. It appeared that they were anxious lest we were asking them to place themselves in the position where they were risking being involved alone. As I had explained to M. Maisky yesterday, this was not our intention and, if this was the only matter of difficulty, I should hope that it would be comparatively simple to overcome it.

5. I told M. Blum, in reply to an enquiry, that our Turkish negotiations were making good progress, but that there was a difficulty about whether the suggested declaration should be made tripartite, by the adhesion of the French Government, or bipartite as between ourselves and the Turks. The French Government attached great importance to its being tripartite: we, on the other hand, were disposed to feel that bipartite was better, as giving not so definite an impression of encirclement. M. Blum gave me an impression that on the whole he was disposed to agree with our view.

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

² See Volume IV of this Series, No. 484, note 3.

No. 471

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 10)
No. 615 [R 3823/661/67]

PARIS, May 10, 1939

His Majesty's Representative at Paris presents his compliments to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and with reference to Foreign Office telegram No. 193¹ has the honour to transmit to him copy of an *aide-mémoire* from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding the Anglo-Turkish negotiations.

¹ No. 405.

Aide-Mémoire

Le Ministère des Affaires Étrangères remercie l'Ambassade de Sa Majesté Britannique d'avoir bien voulu, par son aide-mémoire du 8 mai,¹ le renseigner sur l'état des négociations que le Gouvernement britannique poursuit avec le Gouvernement turc.

Le Ministère des Affaires Étrangères a pris connaissance avec intérêt de ces indications qui confirment celles que l'Ambassadeur de France lui avait communiquées. La procédure prévue par le Gouvernement britannique et qui paraît [être] acceptée par le Gouvernement turc (publication d'une déclaration commune; négociation d'un accord français; conversations d'experts sur les questions économiques, financières et militaires; négociation, enfin, d'un traité d'assistance mutuelle de longue durée) semble au Gouvernement français répondre heureusement dans ses étapes successives aux circonstances qui ont amené les Gouvernements anglais et français à approcher le Gouvernement turc en vue de s'assurer sa coopération au dispositif de sécurité internationale dont les deux Gouvernements poursuivent l'aménagement. Les termes généraux du projet de déclaration commune rencontrent également l'approbation du Gouvernement français.

Par contre, le Gouvernement français croit devoir souligner l'importance qui s'attache à ce que la déclaration commune envisagée revête la forme d'une déclaration tripartite enregistrant publiquement la solidarité de vues et d'action des trois Gouvernements. La question pourrait être réservée de savoir si les accords subséquents dont cette déclaration prévoit la conclusion, garderont, bien que conçus sur les mêmes lignes, un caractère bilatéral; il apparaît par contre essentiel, pour conserver à l'affirmation de la volonté commune des deux Gouvernements de préserver la paix dans la région méditerranéenne toute sa force et toute sa portée, de donner à cette déclaration la forme tripartite que le Gouvernement français, pour sa part, n'a jamais douté, depuis le début de la négociation, qu'il ne fût dans l'intention des trois Gouvernements de lui attribuer.

De son entretien avec Lord Halifax le 1er mai dernier,² l'Ambassadeur de France avait rapporté l'impression que le Gouvernement britannique estimait, comme le Gouvernement français, préférable d'enregistrer les engagements réciproques sous la forme d'un accord tripartite. Le Ministre des Affaires Étrangères de Turquie a, d'autre part, donné à M. Massigli son assentiment à cette procédure. L'accord du Gouvernement turc, dans la forme immédiate et sans réserve sous laquelle il a été donné, paraît au Gouvernement français particulièrement significatif et il serait dans ces conditions d'autant plus regrettable d'avoir à renoncer à une procédure que le Gouvernement d'Ankara a d'emblée acceptée.

Le Ministère des Affaires Étrangères doit rappeler également qu'à l'origine des négociations actuellement en cours avec la Turquie se trouve la

¹ Not printed. See No. 405, note 4.

² See No. 327.

promesse d'assistance que sur l'initiative du Gouvernement britannique, les Gouvernements français et anglais ont simultanément donnée au Gouvernement grec. Les obligations conjointement assumées de ce fait par les deux Gouvernements en Méditerranée orientale ont renforcé leur communauté d'intérêts dans cette région et ont provoqué l'action conjuguée entreprise immédiatement par leurs Ambassadeurs auprès du Gouvernement d'Ankara. A deux reprises, les 11 et 23 avril, le Gouvernement britannique a demandé au Gouvernement français d'inviter M. Massigli à s'associer aux démarches de son Collègue anglais.³ Le Gouvernement français n'a jamais douté que cette solidarité entre les points de vue français et anglais, qu'il était heureux d'affirmer ainsi devant le Gouvernement d'Ankara, ne fût [*sic ? pût*] se traduire normalement par une signature commune du texte à la préparation duquel les deux Ambassadeurs auraient été associés.

Le Ministère des Affaires Étrangères ne considère pas enfin que le caractère tripartite donné à la déclaration envisagée puisse créer une impression inquiétante d'encerclement. Il estime au contraire que les trois Gouvernements ont le plus grand intérêt à affirmer sous la forme la plus convaincante leur volonté commune de s'opposer solidairement à toute action de force menaçant le maintien du *statu quo* dans la région méditerranéenne. Le fait que les trois Gouvernements souscriraient réciproquement le même jour, comme le Gouvernement britannique le suggère, deux déclarations analogues, alors que la signature d'une déclaration unique est logiquement attendue, pourrait laisser croire qu'ils ne se sont pas mis d'accord entre eux en vue d'une coordination éventuelle de leur action. Pareille interprétation risquerait d'encourager les Puissances de l'Axe dans leurs tentatives de dissociation ou d'agression contre les pays rapprochés par une même volonté de résistance et dont elles seraient amenées à sous-estimer la cohésion.

Le Ministère des Affaires Étrangères souhaite vivement que ces observations entraînent l'adhésion du Gouvernement anglais à une formule tripartite d'accord, à laquelle le Gouvernement turc a déjà donné son assentiment.

³ See Nos. 127 and 270.

No. 472

Mr. Shepherd (Danzig) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 16)

No. 111 [C 7130/92/55]

DANZIG, May 10, 1939

My Lord,

Since I had the honour to address Your Lordship, my despatch No. 86¹ of the 4th April, the situation in Danzig has been in a state of constant flux. Against a background of systematic and intensive anti-Polish propaganda by the local National Socialist organ, the 'Danziger Vorposten', which is banned from Poland for an indefinite period, there have been the usual succession of Danzig-Polish incidents—most of them trivial in themselves—many of which were connected with such events as Herr Hitler's birthday, his Reichstag

¹ No. 6.

speech on the 28th April, the celebration of the German and Danzig national holidays on the 1st May, and M. Beck's reply on the 5th May to Herr Hitler.

2. Under the caption, 'Daily Terror of Germans in Poland', the 'Danziger Vorposten' fairly regularly publishes a collection of summarised accounts of alleged Polish acts of aggression (including expulsions) and discrimination against German individuals or institutions in the Republic and particularly in Pommerellia. Besides these summarised collections, it gives daily prominence on the first three pages of each issue to alleged individual instances which, for one reason or another, it deems worthy of special attention, as, for example, the expulsion on the 27th April of the German leader, Dr. von Koerber, and his four children from his ancestral home in Graudenz, leaving his wife in sole charge of the estate. Another case was that of the alleged mass expulsion about the 9th May of 300 German nationals from the Katowice area.

3. That the individual Poles are inclined to indulge in petty provocation or to exercise little restraint over their national feelings seems to be confirmed by the fact that in the course of a casual conversation which I had a few days ago with one of the Counsellors of the Polish Commissariat-General, he informed me with obvious satisfaction that when he recently drove with his wife and a Polish friend from Danzig to Warsaw in a car with a Danzig number plate and without any Polish flag or other indication of its Polish ownership and occupants it had attracted considerable hostile attention and had been three times stopped until the occupants identified themselves, whilst at a place where road repairs obliged it to slow down, a workman seemingly accidentally but skilfully threw a spade full of road dirt into the car.

4. This propaganda and these incidents have irritated Danzig public opinion, which was already nervous as a result of internal conditions and developments. The publication on the 17th April of a decree requiring all residents of the Free City forthwith to convert into Danzig gulden at the current rate of exchange any gold or holdings that they might have of foreign currencies (except reichsmark, zloty and lire), as well as securities in foreign currencies (except the three mentioned above) and the foreign loans of the Free City (unless their holders were resident abroad) caused a shock to public confidence. Although exceptions were made in favour of firms engaged in foreign trade or the traffic of the port, few, if any, exceptions were made in respect of individuals, so that deep covert discontent was engendered among those local residents, including Danzig and German nationals, who were affected by this decree. Rumour ran rife when, simultaneously with the publication of this decree, it was announced that the honorary freedom of the City was to be conferred on Herr Hitler on his birthday. This news and the fact that several foreign press correspondents arrived in the Free City in anticipation of anything that might happen here at that juncture was responsible for widespread reports that the return of Danzig to the Reich was imminent. The head of the Foreign Section of the Senate, however, and a Counsellor of the Polish Commissariat-General, as well as my German colleague and a member of the German Foreign Office, who was visiting Danzig, discounted

these reports and drew attention to the fact that both the President and Vice-President of the Senate as well as the Danzig Gauleiter and many other local officials would be absent in Berlin in connexion with the birthday celebrations, whereas they would logically remain at their posts were such a momentous event contemplated.

5. This conclusion proved to be justified and the birthday passed off without incident. Nevertheless, after the initial reactionary relief, there was a resumption of the previous nervous expectation, and rumour was again busy in anticipation of the Führer's speech on the 28th April. Articles alleged to have been published in various Polish newspapers, including the 'Gazeta Polska', 'Express Poranny', 'Kurjer Polski', and the 'Robotnik', urging a revision in favour of Poland of the status of Danzig with the suppression of the office of the High Commissioner provoked sharp criticism in the 'Danziger Vorposten' and served further to increase Danzig irritation against Poland and to aggravate the general nervousness.

6. Both German newspapers here emphasised on the 29th April the passage in Herr Hitler's speech on the preceding day, in which he stated that 'Danzig is a German city and desires to return to Germany.' Since the utterance of this remark there has been little, or no, attempt here to conceal the reputed longing of the Free City to be incorporated in the Reich, although the older and more conservative elements, especially in academic and business circles, covertly declare that they are apprehensive of such a development which is neither in the best interest of the community as a whole nor of themselves as individuals.

7. In any case, since the 28th April, steps have been taken further to assimilate conditions and institutions here to those of the Reich. Thus the uniform of the Danzig 'Hilfsdienst', the title of which, since the 1st April, has been changed to 'Danziger Arbeitsdienst', has been superseded by that of the German 'Arbeitsdienst' and the membership has now to take an oath of allegiance to German Danzig. Similarly, the 'Staatsjugend' has been renamed the 'Hitlerjugend', and the decree by which this change was effected makes compulsory the enrolment in the organisation of all boys and girls between the ages of 10 and 18 years of age. The head of each of the local Administrative Departments is henceforth to be known as the President of that department, e.g., the President of the Customs Administration, the President of the Post and Telegraph Administration, the President of the Tax Department, &c., in harmony with the similar practice in the Reich.

8. Under the provisions of the Senate decree of the 2nd November, 1938 (my despatch No. 185 of the 18th November, 1938²), the officials of the individual Danzig Government Administrative Departments are being resworn in their offices, taking the oath of allegiance to the National Socialist party. In the academic group, the headmasters have already been so sworn, and it is expected that the teachers will be similarly sworn in the near future.

² Not printed. This despatch reported the introduction of a decree substituting an oath to the National Socialist party and Government of Danzig for the existing oath to the Constitution. See also Volume III of this Series, No. 319.

In reply to an enquiry as to the compatibility of the new oath with the obligations of the teachers under the Constitution of the Free City, the party representatives ('Parteivertrauensmänner') in the schools have unofficially stated that the Constitution is now moribund, and that the taking of the new oath is intended to bring this fact home to the Poles. It is suggested that the interval between the swearing of the headmasters and of the general body of the teachers is intended to enable the Administration to judge the reactions which the measure provokes.

9. On the 1st May nearly 100,000 persons representing the various business and industrial undertakings and the National Socialist organisations, &c., of Danzig paraded on the 'Maifeld' to hear the broadcast there of Herr Hitler's speech. Gauleiter Forster announced to those present that he had addressed a telegram of thanks to the Führer for his remark on the 28th April that 'Danzig is a German city and desires to return to the Reich.' Following is a translation of this telegram:

'The Danzig population assembled for the May-day celebrations greet their Leader in faithfulness and obedience. We Danzigers thank you, my Leader, from overflowing hearts for the words which you found for German Danzig at the last Reichstag speech.'

The Führer is reputed to have telegraphed his thanks for this message, but the text of his reply was not published.

10. On the 2nd May both the German newspapers here gave front page prominence to four demands, which had been published as coming from Warsaw in the 'Daily Telegraph' and other London newspapers, and which, it was alleged, M. Beck would make regarding Danzig in his reply to Herr Hitler. These demands were quoted as—

- (1) A Polish protectorate over Danzig;
- (2) The Polish right to veto decisions of the Senate;
- (3) The military occupation of Danzig by Poland; and
- (4) Polish control of Danzig heavy industry.

They aroused keen resentment here, where it was declared that, should all or any of them in fact be included in the Polish Foreign Minister's speech, Danzig would immediately be occupied by German troops.

11. A representative from Berlin of the 'Daily Telegraph', who visited Danzig to report on the reaction here to M. Beck's speech, informed me subsequently that this list of 'demands' had been issued to the foreign press representatives in Warsaw by the Press Bureau of the Polish Foreign Office, and that, although they knew that the 'demands' were fictitious, they communicated them to their London offices in the hope that, if published, 'they would give the big boys in Berlin something to think about'. In view of the tense atmosphere already prevailing here and the potentially very serious consequences, had all or any of the alleged demands been included, or even mentioned, by M. Beck in his speech, the publication of such spurious news at such a juncture seems like playing with fire wholly unnecessarily.

12. The Polish national holiday was celebrated in Danzig on the 3rd May

by the usual Mass in the Polish church followed by a series of receptions, by the Polish Commissioner-General, of the President of the Senate, the Representative of the League of Nations, the local foreign official representatives, &c. The Danzig Senate was represented at the church by one of its members, whom nobody seemed to recognise. At the Commissioner-General's reception of the local foreign official representatives photographs were taken of the host surrounded by his guests. This was a departure from the procedure in previous years, but was in keeping with the similar procedure at this year's dinner given by the President of the Senate to the same representatives, who attributed the innovation to the fact that each host felt that this was probably the last, and consequently for him a historic, occasion, of which he desired to have a photographic record.

13. In the neighbourhood of the church where the service was held, Polish collectors sold small amber emblems bearing reproductions of the Danzig Cathedral Church and of the Danzig Town Hall with a Polish inscription, for the benefit of some Polish charity, although it is stated that they had not the requisite police permission to make such a collection. An incident occurred when the police endeavoured to obtain the name and address of one of these collectors. This caused a crowd of about fifty persons to collect, and one of their number is alleged to have urged the crowd in Polish not to answer the police in German as 'the swine should learn to speak Polish'. The offender was arrested.

14. Both the local German newspapers contained many derogatory references to the Polish national holiday and its celebration, and the 'Danziger Vorposten' devoted its entire front page to such commentary under the caption 'The Polish Ass between two Bundles of Hay', which was printed in very bold type right across the top of that page. According to the same newspaper, a meeting in the Sport Hall on the evening of the holiday, when M. Surzynski, the Vice-Marshal of the Polish Sejm, was the principal speaker, was poorly attended. He is stated to have declared that compromise in the German-Polish relationship was impossible. 'The Poles recognise that Danzig is politically and economically German, but that Polish rights in the Free City must be preserved. The territory of the Vistula and the Baltic is a "Lebensraum" of the Polish people, which it cannot abandon.'

15. Although a certain number of windows in Polish houses and institutions in Danzig are stated to have been broken on both the 1st May and the 3rd May no serious incidents are known to have occurred.

16. On the 5th May the afternoon edition of the 'Danziger Neueste Nachrichten' published without comment a translation of M. Beck's speech, and the following day commented upon it. A translation³ of this commentary is forwarded herewith. The 'Danziger Vorposten' did not publish either a translation or résumé of the speech, but published a far more extensive and destructive commentary than the 'Neueste Nachrichten' upon it, and on the 8th May announced with pride that this commentary had been given wide publicity in the German and foreign press.

³ Not printed.

17. The same day the 'Danziger Vorposten' complained with some justification about the false reports which had been made by the foreign, particularly British, press and radio, to the effect that President Greiser and Gauleiter Forster had flown to Herr Hitler at Berchtesgaden. So far as I am aware the President of the Senate was in Danzig until the 6th May, when he flew to Hamburg to participate in the 750 year celebrations there of the foundation of that port, whilst Herr Forster is reputed to be in Wiesbaden convalescing after his recent operation.

18. Collateral with the local anti-Polish campaign, there are almost equally active anti-American and anti-British ones, which seem gradually to be achieving some measure of success, because Danzigers, who were formerly frankly critical of the National Socialist régime and generous in their appreciation of British efforts to maintain peace, have become noticeably calmer in their attitude towards national socialism and more inclined to question the fairness of Britain's firmer policy. Although outwardly all Danzigers feel obliged to pay lip service to the National Socialist slogan of 'Back to the Reich', it is generally recognised that the members of the Administrations as well as all persons engaged in business would much prefer to maintain the *status quo* in the Free City indefinitely, since any alteration of it threatens the former with the loss of their jobs and the latter with the loss of their prosperity. Whilst, however, there is strong covert hostility to national socialism, there is infinitely stronger and more active hostility to any idea of an increase in Polish influence in or, still more, to Polish domination of the Free City, so that, should the plebiscite, which has been mooted in certain quarters, regarding the return of Danzig to the Reich, in fact be held I do not believe that there is the slightest doubt that there would be an overwhelming vote in favour of return, especially as the questions would certainly be so framed that even strong opponents of national socialism would probably find it difficult to record a negative vote. It is noteworthy that many arrests have recently been made in Danzig of residents for derogatory comments on, or criticisms of, Herr Hitler and his recent speeches.

19. Meanwhile, the protracted nervous restlessness and uncertainty which now pervades the entire adult population here is having a curious, but in the final analysis, progressively detrimental effect upon the economic interests of the Free City. The uncertainty as to the future of Danzig and its currency has stimulated an active market for real estate and commodities, for which the purchasers are not only willing, but actually anxious to pay cash with order, so that even tailors are surprised to find that their customers are insisting on paying for suits when they are ordered, but before they are delivered or even made. On the other hand, the wholesale business in heavy staple commodities such as coal, grain, timber, &c., which call for long term contracts, is virtually at a standstill, since nobody seems to feel justified in entering into obligations of a longer duration than twenty-four to forty-eight hours.

20. And thus life goes on here, outwardly calm and peaceful, but inwardly anxiously expectant and disturbed by innumerable rumours—often conflicting, fantastic and sensational—so that it becomes increasingly difficult

to discriminate between those which may have some, and those which have no, foundation in fact.

21. Copies of this despatch and its enclosure are being sent to His Majesty's Ambassadors at Berlin and Warsaw.

I have, &c.,
G. SHEPHERD

No. 473

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax
(Received May 11, 8.45 a.m.)

No. 210 Telegraphic [R 3848/661/67]

ANGORA, May 11, 1939, 1.50 a.m.

Your telegram No. 164,¹ Paris telegram No. 200A² and your telegram No. 195 to Paris.³

Prime Minister dined with me on May 10 and I spoke to him in the sense of your telegram No. 164. Both he and high official of Ministry of Foreign Affairs told me Turkish Government contemplated two bilateral declarations, viz: Anglo-Turkish and Franco-Turkish.

2. French Ambassador who was also present agreed as to the importance of earliest possible issue of Declaration.

3. I feel that apart from other considerations this is essential in view of the prompt and friendly way in which Turkish Government have accepted our suggestions.

Repeated to Paris.

¹ No. 447.

² No. 446.

³ No. 450.

No. 474

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Sir P. Loraine (Rome)

No. 21¹ Telegraphic [C 6916/54/18]¹

BERLIN, May 11, 1939, 12.38 p.m.

Your telegram No. 46 to me.²

I cannot well act personally as regards persons mentioned in paragraph 2 of Foreign Office telegram No. 150³ unless I get favourable opportunity. I have however asked Military Attaché to see Deputy Chief of Staff at an early date and to seek occasion to speak to him in the sense of paragraph 3 as representing official attitude of His Majesty's Government.

2. In any case language used by you on exact sense of paragraph 3 will be in conformity with that which I have already used here to all and sundry. Italian Ambassador here for instance who was at Ciano-Ribbentrop meeting

¹ This telegram was addressed to Rome as telegram No. 21, and repeated as No. 368 to the Foreign Office, where it was received on May 11 at 2.0 p.m.

² No. 448.

³ No. 431.

was fully cognisant before that meeting of position of His Majesty's Government in this respect.

Repeated to Foreign Office.

No. 475

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 11, 2.0 p.m.)
No. 370 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 6914/54/18]

BERLIN, May 11, 1939

My telegram 21 to Rome.¹

In view of telephonic instructions from you this morning² no action will be taken pending receipt of further instructions.

2. Actually I had requested Military Attaché when speaking to German military authorities to modify text of paragraph 3 of your telegram No. 150³ as follows:

First three sentences down to 'join us' as they stand with a sentence to the effect that it is not a question of Danzig *per se* but one of principle of resistance to aggression.

3. I had also authorised him, if opportunity afforded itself, to leave German text to above effect as if it were a translation made for his own [? use].

4. In talking in the sense of the latter part of that paragraph he was to have omitted reference to Nazi régime which might have given the impression that this Embassy was trying to sow dissension between the army and the party and would have spoken of collapse of European civilisation instead of as worded at the end of paragraph in question.

5. In penultimate sentence instead of words: 'be quite certain' he was to have said that Western Powers 'would certainly hold out until finally victorious'.

Repeated to Rome.

¹ No. 474.

² The reference is uncertain, but may be to No. 455 which was repeated to Berlin.

³ No. 431.

No. 476

Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)
No. 155 Telegraphic [C 6914/54/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 11, 1939, 2.5 p.m.

My telegram No. 150.¹

I quite understand that no opportunity may occur of meeting a suitable member of High Command. If so, I should prefer that you should *not* deliver the message through a third party such as the Military Attaché.

¹ No. 431.

No. 477

Viscount Halifax to Sir P. Loraine (Rome)

No. 241 Telegraphic [C 6871/54/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 11, 1939, 2.35 p.m.

Your telegram No. 452.¹

1. You should on no account disclose that any such invitations² have been sent to Sir N. Henderson.

2. I should not, however, mind your speaking to Signor Mussolini, as expressing your own opinion, if he gives you an opening. For example, if, as is probable, conversation ranges over European situation, it is likely that Signor Mussolini may refer to Danzig as the danger spot. In that event you could say that that causes you also some concern, in view of our guarantee to Poland which His Majesty's Government are certainly resolved to carry out in all good faith. You could speak on the lines of paragraph 3 of my telegram No. 150 to Berlin,³ but as expressing your own strong conviction, and not as a message from His Majesty's Government.

Repeated to Berlin.

¹ No. 452.

² This word appears to be a mistake for 'instructions'.

³ No. 431.

No. 478

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax

(Received May 11, 2.35 p.m.)

No. 213 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 3876/661/67]

ANGORA, May 11, 1939

(Reference omitted).¹

Meaning is that Turkish Government refuse to make Franco-Turkish declaration until they have something definite about Hatay. Minister for Foreign Affairs showed me single clause which he required and I have informed my French colleague. I spoke to Minister for Foreign Affairs in the sense of last paragraph of your telegram No. 169.² I was quite unable to move him.

2. Clause which Minister for Foreign Affairs showed me seemed to provide generally for cession of Hatay 'with its present frontiers'. My French colleague anticipates difficulty over words quoted. He is seeing Minister for Foreign Affairs as soon as possible.

3. In view of first paragraph of your telegram No. 189 to Paris³ I have left

¹ The reference should probably be to Angora telegram No. 212 (No. 479).

² No. 460.

³ This reference appears to be mistaken: it should perhaps be to telegram No. 187 Saving to Paris (No. 463). Telegram No. 189 to Paris inquired whether Sir E. Phipps had any information regarding a report from Alexandretta that Turkey was about to annex the Hatay by agreement with France.

it with Minister for Foreign Affairs that (? bilateral)⁴ declaration will be made here and in London tomorrow *unless I informed him to the contrary*. My French colleague did not welcome this.

Repeated to Paris.

⁴ The text is here uncertain.

No. 479

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax
(Received May 11, 2.45 p.m.)

No. 212 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 3875/661/67]

ANGORA, May 11, 1939

Your telegram No. 169.¹

Minister for Foreign Affairs gave me the following reply:

Turkish Government desire to make declaration bilaterally with His Majesty's Government tomorrow and if by that time they are in a position to make it with the French Government they will do so. If His Majesty's Government desire it to be a tripartite declaration, though Turkish Government prefer bilateral form, they will not hesitate to give satisfaction to the request of His Majesty's Government. If by that time Turkish Government are not able to make declaration with the French Government they beg His Majesty's Government to make it bilaterally with Turkish Government and postpone Franco-Turkish declaration to such a time as the Turkish Government can make it.

See my immediately following telegram.²

Repeated to Paris.

¹ No. 460.

² No. 478.

No. 480

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax
(Received May 12, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 214 Telegraphic [R 3884/661/67]

ANGORA, May 11, 1939, 5.20 p.m.

Your telegram No. 167.¹

I spoke to Minister for Foreign Affairs. He said that he had received formal undertaking from Yugoslav Minister for Foreign Affairs that he would not commit himself to any engagement during his visit to Italy.

2. His Excellency did not think it necessary to take advantage of your offer. Repeated to Paris, Athens, Belgrade and Bucharest.

¹ No. 453.

*Sir W. Seeds (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax**(Received May 11, 6.45 p.m.)**No. 90 Telegraphic [C 7001/3778/18]*

MOSCOW, May 11, 1939, 5.40 p.m.

After silence of some three weeks 'Izvestiya' publishes today an important article which must be considered to represent views of Soviet Government. It begins by declaring claim made by political leaders of Western Powers to the effect that Herr Hitler's speech and conclusion of a military-political alliance between Germany and Italy have made no material change in European situation is incorrect. As a result of Herr Hitler's speech two agreements, i.e., the Naval Agreement between England and Germany and the Treaty of Non-Aggression between Poland and Germany have ceased to exist. Both of these Agreements regulated relations between countries concerned. Furthermore, the conclusion of a political and military alliance between Germany and Italy means that Europe will now have to deal with a united general and military policy indisputably directed against England and France (the Soviet people have always been convinced that Anti-Comintern Pact between Germany, Italy and Japan was merely a mask for aggressive action against England and France) and any hopes of detaching Italy from Germany must now fall to the ground. Undoubtedly seizure of Czecho-Slovakia and Albania, the denunciation of two agreements by Germany and conclusion of an alliance between Germany and Italy are most serious events which have caused situation in Europe radically to deteriorate.

Article then continues as follows:

'As a result of this the democratic States have intensified their search for ways and means of creating a united peace front to stem aggression, and it is in these circumstances that negotiations were initiated between England and France on the one hand and the U.S.S.R. on the other, aiming at organisation of an effective peace front against aggression.

'Foreign politicians and journalists have spread libellous reports about attitude of the U.S.S.R. in these negotiations, which is accused of demanding a direct military alliance with England and France and an almost immediate entering upon military operations against aggressors. There is no necessity to prove that this absurdity has nothing in common with attitude of the U.S.S.R.

'The U.S.S.R. has been and still is of the opinion that if France and England really wish to set up a barrier against aggression in Europe, the way to do it is to create a united front of mutual assistance in the first place, between four chief European Powers—England, France, U.S.S.R. and Poland, or at least between three Powers—England, France and U.S.S.R., arrangement being that these three Powers, bound together on a basis of reciprocity by a pact of mutual assistance, should guarantee other Powers in Eastern and Central Europe which are under the menace of aggression.

'It is necessary to state that this clear and genuinely defensive and peaceful policy of the U.S.S.R., based on principle of reciprocity and equal obligations, did not meet with approval on part of England and France. As is known, England put forward counter-proposals with approval of France. In her proposals England passes over question of a pact of mutual assistance between France, England and the U.S.S.R. and considers that Soviet Government should render immediate assistance to England and France should these countries be involved in hostilities when fulfilling the obligations they have undertaken by their guarantees to Poland and Roumania, but no mention is made in British proposals of any assistance, which if principle of reciprocity is applied, U.S.S.R. would naturally have to receive from England and France, should it be involved in hostilities fulfilling obligations it had assumed by guaranteeing certain States in Eastern Europe.

'Any arrangement like the one outlined in above would place the U.S.S.R. in an unequal position, though its liabilities would be equivalent to those falling on England and France. We will, moreover, not dwell on the fact that the extremely interesting problem of practical resistance to aggression, and the date when this resistance is to be put into effect is left, under this arrangement, to the decision of either England or France alone, although brunt of resistance would have to be borne chiefly on shoulders of the U.S.S.R. owing to latter's geographical situation.

'We are told that by defending Poland and Roumania, England and France are, in fact, defending western frontiers of the U.S.S.R. against attack. This is not true. In first place the western frontiers of the U.S.S.R. are not restricted to Poland and Roumania. In the second place, and this is important, by defending Poland and Roumania, England and France are defending themselves and not western frontiers of the U.S.S.R., because they have a pact of mutual assistance with Poland which in its turn is obliged to go to assistance of England and France in the event of aggression. As for Roumania having a treaty of alliance with Poland, she must keep in wake of Poland, that is to say, she must in fact play the role of an indirect ally of England and France. As for the U.S.S.R. the position is quite different. Having no pacts of mutual assistance with England and France nor with Poland the U.S.S.R. is obliged to give assistance to all of these three States, not receiving any help whatever from them, whereas in the event of aggression being turned directly against the U.S.S.R., latter will be obliged to rely solely on their own forces.

'Once again the U.S.S.R. is put in an unequal position. In his speech in House of Commons on May 10¹ British Prime Minister spoke of co-operation and of alliance with the U.S.S.R. But co-operation presupposes reciprocity as its natural basis. Where there is no reciprocity there is no possibility of establishing real co-operation.'

¹ See No. 468, note 2.

No. 482

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)
No. 198 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 3875/661/67]

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 11, 1939, 6.0 p.m.

Angora telegrams Nos. 212¹ and 213.²

1. It is clear that the Turkish Government are prepared to make tripartite declaration (as we urged them to do in our telegram No. 169 to Angora³) if the French Government are prepared to meet them over a clause connected with the Hatay negotiations.

2. You should at once see M. Bonnet and explain to him that His Majesty's Government will at 11.0 a.m. tomorrow Friday make a declaration in the House of Commons in tripartite if French Government have before then fixed this up with the Turkish Government. Failing this His Majesty's Government will make the declaration at that hour tomorrow in its bipartite form.⁴

¹ No. 479.

² No. 478.

³ No. 460.

⁴ Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen was instructed on May 11 that he could inform the Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs 'of the language which Sir E. Phipps had been instructed to hold to M. Bonnet'.

No. 483

Viscount Halifax to Mr. Snow (Helsingfors)
No. 24 Telegraphic [N 2391/64/63]

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 11, 1939, 6.0 p.m.

Your telegram No. 46.¹

Finnish Minister has made similar statement to me. I have assured him that Finland has not been mentioned in Anglo-Soviet negotiations and that His Majesty's Government, appreciating her position, would never have agreed to a Soviet guarantee for her without her consent. Soviet Government's original plan had involved a guarantee of the States from Baltic to Black Sea, but His Majesty's Government had assumed this to refer to Poland, Roumania and Baltic States only. In any case plan has not been accepted, and His Majesty's Government's own proposals do not involve guarantee to Finland in any form.

Repeated to Copenhagen, Oslo, Stockholm and Moscow.

¹ No. 449.

No. 484

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 11, 6.15 p.m.)
No. 202 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 3878/661/67]

PARIS, May 11, 1939

Your telegram No. 198.¹

M. Daladier and M. Bonnet are actually engaged this afternoon in the Foreign Affairs Debate in the Chamber.

2. Meanwhile, however, matter has been brought to urgent notice of Secretary-General of Ministry for Foreign Affairs, who has called a meeting of prominent officials, with a view to drawing up draft of revised instructions to French Ambassador at Angora, for approval of French Ministers. M. Léger will at once inform M. Bonnet in the Chamber of substance of your telegram under reply.

¹ No. 482.

No. 485

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora)
No. 176 Telegraphic [R 3876/661/67]

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 11, 1939, 6.30 p.m.

Your telegram No. 213¹ paragraph 3.

Declaration will be made in Parliament at 11 a.m. (British summer time) tomorrow Friday morning in tripartite form (text according to amendments contained in my telegram No. 170²), if I hear from you before 10 a.m. (British summer time) tomorrow that Turkish Government have fixed matters with the French. If I do not hear from you by then that this is so, Declaration will be made in bipartite Anglo-Turkish form as agreed in my telegram No. 161³ and your telegrams Nos. 205⁴ and 206.⁵

¹ No. 478.

² No. 461.

³ No. 423.

⁴ No. 443.

⁵ No. 444.

No. 486

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 11, 8.0 p.m.)
No. 371 Telegraphic [C 6991/54/18]

BERLIN, May 11, 1939, 6.37 p.m.

Italian Ambassador, whose name should not be mentioned, gave me the [*sic*] solemn assurance yesterday that the basis of Ciano-Ribbentrop discussions at Milan had been entirely on the lines of ensuring peace. Idea of both Governments was that the Danzig question should be allowed to remain dormant for two months during which it was hoped that the excitability in

Poland would subside and allow more reasonable attitude to be adopted. He said that Germany's chief anxiety now was that she should not in the meantime find herself put up against a wall, as he expressed it, by Poland's acts. He referred particularly in this connexion to the constantly growing number of German refugees at Rummelsburg, etc. (See the last paragraph of 'Times' correspondent's report in its May 10 issue¹.)

Repeated to Rome and Warsaw.

¹ This paragraph drew attention to the similarity between the situation with regard to German refugees from the Corridor and that which existed in the summer of 1938 over the Sudeten German refugees.

No. 487

Viscount Halifax to Mr. Osborne (The Vatican)

No. 15 Telegraphic [R 3862/6/22]

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 11, 1939, 7.5 p.m.

Your telegram No. 27.¹

You should inform the Cardinal Secretary of State that His Majesty's Government made enquiries in Paris and Warsaw in order to ascertain their views as to the idea which as shown in your telegram No. 22² and my telegram No. 10³ His Holiness had under consideration. From these enquiries it clearly emerged that the line of progress which appeared to offer most immediate hope of improvement would be if His Holiness could take steps to assist German-Polish negotiations on questions outstanding between these two Governments.

2. Although I now understand from your telegram under reference that the Pope does not intend to proceed at present with his project, I would like His Holiness to know that His Majesty's Government would be ready to lend all support in their power to any effort on the lines indicated in the previous paragraph whenever His Holiness may feel that the time is appropriate for such initiative.

3. When speaking to Cardinal Secretary of State on these lines, I should be glad if you would repeat in appropriate language on behalf of His Majesty's Government the assurances reported in last paragraph of your telegram No. 27.

4. Although His Holiness's soundings may not have produced the full result for which all lovers of peace may have hoped, we are confident that knowledge, throughout the world, of interest which he has evinced will not fail to exert powerful moral influence for good. We earnestly hope that if at any time opportunity should arise of securing general support for a further and maybe wider effort, His Holiness will not fail to avail himself of it in common interests of world peace.

¹ No. 454.

² No. 356.

³ No. 380.

No. 488

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw)

No. 156 Telegraphic [C 6859/92/55]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 11, 1939, 7.15 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 148.¹

I am in general agreement with M. Beck's opinion and suggested course of action.

2. It would seem preferable that High Commissioner should not go to Warsaw before the Council meets, but I consider it important that M. Beck should issue his invitation to him before that meeting, which I understand is now postponed to May 22. Such an invitation would provide High Commissioner with some *raison d'être* and would furnish additional argument for maintaining present position. Visit of High Commissioner would afford opportunity for first-hand discussion with Colonel Beck as to his future which might be useful.

3. I am not clear whether M. Beck would prefer High Commissioner to go to Berlin before he comes to Warsaw or vice versa. Unless he has strong views I should be inclined to leave this to High Commissioner's judgement.

4. Question of High Commissioner's return to Danzig can be left open until after he has paid his visits.

Repeated to Paris, Stockholm, Berlin and Danzig.

¹ No. 428.

No. 489

Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)

No. 157 Telegraphic [C 7045/54/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 11, 1939, 8.10 p.m.*

1. It is clear from your reports that Herr von Ribbentrop and others who think like him still believe that His Majesty's Government are not prepared to implement their guarantee to Poland, or at all events do not regard the Danzig question as coming within the scope of the guarantee.

2. We are naturally ready and anxious to see a fair settlement reached. But the Poles could never agree to procedure by way of unilateral action or ultimatum. If the German Government should demand the unconditional return of Danzig, it is in our view certain that the Poles would consider that their independence was menaced and that any employment of force by Germany for this purpose would be met by force on the part of Poland. And if by such action on Germany's part hostilities broke out between Germany and Poland, there is no doubt that both we and the French would come in and that many other States would be likely to join us. The German Government may regard such an eventuality with equanimity, but in our view whatever damage they might inflict on the Western Powers, the latter would

be quite certain to triumph in the end. In other words, if Herr Hitler provoked a war over Danzig, it would result not only in the destruction of the Nazi régime, but also very probably in the final collapse of the Great-German Reich.

3. You should be guided by this telegram in any discussions which you may have with the German Ministers on this subject.¹

Repeated to Rome.

¹ In a letter of May 10 to Sir A. Cadogan, Sir N. Henderson suggested the possibility of sending telegram No. 150 (No. 431) 'as if by error' in a cypher which the Germans could decode. Sir N. Henderson suggested the omission of paragraph 2 from the telegram. The Foreign Office decided to act on this suggestion and informed Sir N. Henderson and Sir P. Loraine.

Sir N. Henderson also wrote in this letter that he was using language 'practically identical' with that of telegram No. 150 to all who were 'likely to repeat it in useful quarters'. He would tell the Military Attaché 'to do so equally in any conversations he may have with German officers'. Sir N. Henderson said that if he had an opportunity of seeing 'Keitel, &c.' he would, 'of course, speak accordingly'.

No. 490

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 11, 10.30 p.m.)
No. 203 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 3879/661/67]

PARIS, May 11, 1939

My telegram No. 202.¹

Secretary-General of Ministry for Foreign Affairs has just telephoned that French Ambassador at Angora has been instructed by telephone to liquidate Franco-Turkish negotiations tonight by giving Turkish Government sufficient satisfaction on the point at issue to ensure agreement.

Repeated to Angora.

¹ No. 484.

No. 491

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax
(Received May 11, 11.15 p.m.)
No. 215 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 3880/661/67]

ANGORA, May 11, 1939

Your telegram No. 176.¹

Turkish Government have been unable to reach agreement with French Ambassador.

2. They will therefore make declaration in bilateral form tomorrow afternoon May 12.

Repeated to Paris.

¹ No. 485.

No. 492

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)

No. 192 Saving: Telegraphic [C 6859/92/55]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 11, 1939*

Warsaw telegrams No. 146¹ and 148² and my telegram No. 156 to Warsaw.³

1. I have reached conclusion that when Committee of Three on Danzig meets at Geneva on May 22, it should not recommend any change in position of High Commissioner or connexion of League with Danzig. On wide grounds of policy it is undesirable for the Council to take action which might aggravate the present delicate situation in regard to Danzig. It is also desirable that nothing should be done to weaken Poland. The position of Poland in the international field has altered very much since the last meeting of the Committee.

2. The fact that Colonel Beck intends to invite the High Commissioner to visit Warsaw for consultation and has no objection to his visiting Berlin en route is an additional reason for not provoking his resignation at the present moment.

3. You will observe that Polish Government regard it as immaterial whether or not High Commissioner returns to Danzig. I think this point could be left open until after High Commissioner's visits to Warsaw and Berlin.

4. Please inform French Government of views of Polish Government reported in Warsaw telegram No. 148, and put to them consideration outlined above. I hope they will agree.⁴

Repeated to Warsaw, Stockholm, Berlin and Danzig.

¹ No. 417.

² No. 428.

³ No. 488.

⁴ Sir E. Phipps reported on May 12 the agreement of the French Government.

No. 493

Minute by Sir A. Cadogan

[C 7110/54/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 11, 1939*

The French Ambassador called this evening and gave me a summary of a telegram received from the French Ambassador in Berlin reporting a conversation with Baron von Weizsäcker from which His Excellency seemed to gain certain comfort. M. Coulondre said that Baron von Weizsäcker appeared to be in a fairly calm and sensible mood and seemed to think that a peaceful settlement might not be impossible. On the other hand, he did not indicate that Germany had any fresh proposals to make but that the German Government were awaiting a move on the part of M. Beck. Baron von Weizsäcker further referred to various incidents in Poland involving Germans. M. Coulondre retorted that the fault was not all on one side, alleging that in

the past fortnight there had been sixty violations of the frontier by German military aircraft.

On the whole, from the account that M. Corbin gave me from the telegram, I did not see that there was any very solid ground for satisfaction.

A. C.

No. 494

Viscount Halifax to Sir W. Seeds (Moscow)

No. 366 [C 6922/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 11, 1939

Sir,

During the course of a conversation with the Soviet Ambassador this morning I asked His Excellency whether he had any further information as yet from his Government in regard to what had seemed to be a misunderstanding of the British formula, to which we had referred in our last conversation.¹ M. Maisky said that he had received no instructions as yet, but again developed the insistence of his Government on the necessity for complete reciprocity. In the course of conversation he developed his meaning by saying that the Soviet Government might find itself involved in war in virtue of commitments undertaken by them in regard to Baltic States, towards whom His Majesty's Government had no obligation. In such a case the Soviet Government could count on no support from us. To this I replied that the proposal of the Soviet Government to build up a system of guarantees very much wider than we had ourselves suggested or undertaken might or might not be a good plan. But it did not seem to me to afford any evidence of lack of reciprocity in the proposals that we ourselves had put forward. Those proposals concerned only Poland and Roumania, and, in regard to those countries, it seemed to me quite plain that the obligations we were inviting the Soviet Government to undertake were identical with those we ourselves had assumed. It might, indeed, be our view that they were not so great, inasmuch as they were conditional and not absolute. In regard to the position of the Soviet Government in relation to other hypothetical commitments they might see fit to assume, the fact that in such circumstances we were not bound by our formula to give assistance to the Soviet Government might be reckoned as being exactly on all fours with the fact that the Soviet Government were not bound by our formula to give any assistance to us if we were involved with Germany, for example, in virtue of our guarantee to Belgium, or by any guarantee that we might give to any of the other smaller Western Powers. I still, therefore, failed to see how there was any just ground for maintaining that our proposal denied the principle of reciprocity. It seemed to me, perhaps, that part of the difficulty in M. Maisky's thought consisted in the fact that he spoke of Russian assistance being rendered to France and Great Britain, whereas, in fact, what we contemplated was Soviet

¹ See No. 433.

assistance being rendered to Poland and Roumania, who would already be assured of assistance from France and ourselves.

2. In connexion with his general argument M. Maisky mentioned military conversations and sought to establish the case that, under our proposal, the date of Anglo-French intervention would be uncertain, inasmuch as this would depend on the decisions of the French and British General Staffs, and that, accordingly, again the Soviet Government would not exactly know when such intervention would take place. To this I replied that our guarantee to Poland and Roumania involved us in coming immediately to their assistance, if our conditions were fulfilled, and that, if words meant anything, it was impossible for us to give any assurance more complete. M. Maisky promised again to let me have a reasoned note from his Government on the points which, in their view, required elucidation, and said that he hoped it would be possible to clear up a good many of them before the postponed meeting of the Council at Geneva.²

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

² The meeting of the Council of the League of Nations had been postponed from May 15 to May 22.

No. 495

Viscount Halifax to Mr. Rendel (Sofia)

No. 133 [R 3882/661/67]

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 11, 1939

Sir,

The Bulgarian Minister came to see me this morning on his return from Sofia and gave me his views about Balkan affairs.

2. M. Momtchiloff began by saying that there had been an interesting change in the Balkan situation since the occupation of Prague and more especially as a result of the seizure of Albania. The most important change was, of course, in the position of Yugoslavia, who was now faced with more effective pressure from both Germany and Italy, economically as well as politically. German and Italian pressure was not always co-ordinated, especially in economic matters, and later on the Yugoslav Government might be able to use this divergence of interests of the Axis Powers for manœuvre. For the present, however, it would be very dangerous for the Yugoslav Government to give Germany or Italy any reason for thinking that one was being played off against the other. Meanwhile Yugoslavia's relations with Hungary were improving, mainly as a result of German and Italian pressure on Hungary. In fact, it looked as if Yugoslavia and Hungary would very shortly reach a *modus vivendi* which should last for a long term. This arrangement would not, of course, be a permanent settlement and would not include any rectification of frontiers; but it would in effect be a semi-permanent settlement.

3. The other main change in the Balkans was the effect of the seizure of Albania on the Balkan Entente. This Entente had been created to resist aggression by a Balkan State; but now there was no danger of such aggression and the danger was from other quarters. In this connexion the Balkan Powers had recently been rather apprehensive of an Italian move for an independent Macedonia at the expense of Yugoslavia, Greece and also Bulgaria. Such a move would, no doubt, be initiated by Macedonian organisations which had at times been financed from Italy and elsewhere. It went without saying that Bulgaria did not want an independent Macedonia, as Bulgaria would no doubt be expected to contribute a slice of her own territory.

4. This led me to enquire whether there was any likelihood of Balkan unity, including Bulgaria, being reached with the object of resisting aggression from outside the Balkans. To this the Bulgarian Minister replied that he did not wish to leave me under any impression that this was practical politics at present. Even if there was a complete settlement between Bulgaria and Roumania and Greece, it would be impossible for Bulgarian troops to assist in the defence of the northern or western boundaries of Roumania or the northern boundary of Greece. At the same time, it was a fundamental principle of the Bulgarian Government that the Balkan countries should concert together before deciding their attitude toward any diplomatic approach from non-Balkan quarters. They had acted on this principle at the Conferences of Montreux¹ and Nyon² and the Bulgarian Minister assured me that his Prime Minister was determined to carry on this policy of Balkan consultation. He described it, however, as a policy for preserving the collective neutrality of the Balkans, and he held out no hope that such a policy of mutual consultation could be transferred into a united Balkan front to resist aggression from outside.

5. In reply to my enquiry M. Momtchiloff told me that, up to the time of his departure from Sofia on the 8th May, there had been no approach from the Roumanian Government about either political or economic matters. Moreover, when his Prime Minister had visited Angora recently, the President of the Turkish Republic, M. İnönü, had not made any mention of Bulgarian-Roumanian relations.

6. M. Momtchiloff also denied, so far as Bulgaria was concerned, that there was any truth in the press report that Russia had offered a guarantee to the Balkan States. When M. Potemkin had passed through Sofia he had, however, emphasised that Russia intended to maintain her traditional role of interest in Balkan affairs. The Bulgarian Government, for their part, were rather apprehensive of such a policy; for, if Russian troops ever were to come to the assistance of a Balkan State, the Russian Government would probably wish permanently to keep some bases in the Balkans on the coast, and it would be beyond the power of the Balkan countries to prevent this. In his opinion it would be a good deal less difficult for the Bulgarian and other

¹ The Montreux Conference of June 1936.

² The Nyon Conference of September 1937.

Balkan Governments to accept assistance from Russia in the form of equipment than of men.

7. As he was leaving M. Momtchiloff referred to the difficulties which the Bulgarian Government were experiencing internally. There was strong feeling in Bulgaria that the Government had not used its recent opportunities to the best advantage. He, for his part, did not think that opportunities had, in fact, existed for any forward policy. With this I told him I entirely agreed. The way to obtain fair consideration for Bulgarian views and wishes was clearly to work patiently and steadily to improve her relations with her neighbours. In an improved atmosphere a real opportunity was far more likely to occur. The Minister said that this was the view of his Government, but of course it was not a policy of which it was easy to convince public opinion in Bulgaria.

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

No. 496

Viscount Halifax to Sir R. Hoare (Bucharest)

No. 242 [R 3865/661/67]

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 11, 1939

Sir,

The Roumanian Minister was asked to call at this department on the 10th May, in order that he might be given a copy of the text of the proposed Anglo-Turkish Declaration (a copy of this is enclosed for convenience of reference).¹ It was explained to M. Tilea that this was being done in view of the new relationship between His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom and the Roumanian Government created by the guarantee given by the former. It was imagined, it was explained, that the Turkish Government had probably kept the Roumanian and Greek Governments fully informed, as members of the Balkan Entente, of the negotiations that had been in progress, and that this text was therefore already known in Bucharest and Athens. It was requested, however, that the Minister should treat the text as confidential, though there was no objection to his letting his Government know the fact that this copy had been handed to him, and to his informing his Government of all the circumstances in which it had been given.

2. It was added that it was hoped to make the Declarations public in the course of the next few days: the interval between now and publication would be utilised in arranging for appropriate means whereby the French Government might be associated with the Declaration.

3. A similar communication to the above was also made to the Greek Minister.²

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

¹ Not printed. For the text of the Declaration see Parl. Deb., 5th ser., H. of C., vol. 347, cols. 952-5. ² An identic despatch, *mutatis mutandis*, was sent to Athens on May 11.

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax
(Received May 12, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 216 Telegraphic [R 3903/661/67]

ANGORA, May 12, 1939, 2.20 a.m.

My immediately preceding telegram.¹

1. Minister for Foreign Affairs and French Ambassador, after a somewhat heated discussion, came to an agreement on the basis of a single clause under which French Government undertakes to cede Hatay to Turkey by June 20. There was some discussion as to 'Modalités' and there was evidently a subtle underlying fear on the part of Minister for Foreign Affairs that in spite of this covering agreement, negotiations might break down (or even be made to break down) over question of point of detail when Modalités came to be worked out.

2. Finally however the two reached agreement. I was present not altogether intentionally as I had joined the meeting to go through text of proposed trilateral Declaration and to make certain that agreement between Turks and French had in fact been reached. I made it clear that I had no direct concern in Hatay.

3. We separated after two hours of this discussion to inform our Governments that agreement had been reached and that trilateral Declaration would be made.

4. Less than an hour later Minister for Foreign Affairs called on me to say that after all Turkish Government had decided upon the bilateral Declaration. He had reported proceedings to Prime Minister and President of the Republic who had decided they could not place sufficient confidence in the French assurances to justify tripartite Declaration. His Excellency (and also Secretary-General who has been with me since) laid great stress on their determination that their relations of complete harmony with His Majesty's Government should not be prejudiced by being linked with the French Government. As regards the latter they made no bones about asserting their complete lack of confidence.

5. My French colleague was informed of decision of the Turkish Government. He is naturally furious and speaks of the complete suspension of negotiations, saying that, after efforts made by his Government in the last two days to reach agreement with Turkish Government, the French Government cannot possibly continue negotiations.

6. Secretary-General rang me up shortly afterwards and as I was anxious as to possible developments I asked if he would come and see me quite personally. It was clear from his conversation that the Turkish Government are determined not to come to agreement with the French over Hatay until they see daylight to the end of the new negotiations and have secured themselves against any likelihood of breakdown on individual points. I remarked

¹ No. 491.

that after to-night's events it would be out of the question for the French Government to take a fresh initiative. Secretary-General said Turkish Government would have no pride about taking the initiative themselves. He was convinced that agreement could be reached in a short time after which Franco-Turkish Declaration could be made.

7. Secretary-General explained, as regards wider negotiations, that Turkish Government considered essential factor from point of view of ensuring [*sic* ? insuring] against war was the existence of Anglo-Turkish agreement. If war came Franco-Turkish agreement must follow automatically.

8. I confessed [*sic* ? confess] to some anxiety as to reactions in Paris if my French colleague is in the same frame of mind when he telephones to Quai d'Orsay as when he telephoned me.

9. It may be worth mentioning that in the course of discussions with Minister for Foreign Affairs (? my French colleague said)² there was even a danger of French Government being defeated in the Chamber if they were too yielding about Hatay. I do not know how far this is accurate.

10. My French colleague has rung me up again since above was drafted. He has telephoned M. Léger. I spoke to him in the sense of last three sentences of paragraph 6 above. He said that he imagined that, if Turkish Government made a proposal for a settlement, French Government would be prepared to examine it.

Repeated to Paris.

² This suggested emendation was made in the Foreign Office.

No. 498

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 12, 10.35 a.m.)

No. 204 Telegraphic [R 3883/661/67]

PARIS, May 12, 1939, 9.22 a.m.

Angora telegram No. 215.¹

I made at 8 o'clock this morning another urgent appeal to M. Bonnet to get into immediate personal touch with the French Ambassador at Angora in order to reach agreement before this afternoon.

M. Bonnet will do this but has little hope of success. He accuses the Turks of going back on a recent proposal of their own and of levying blackmail. He must insist on protection of the Armenians in Hatay.

Repeated to Angora.

¹ No. 491.

No. 499

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)
No. 199 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 3903/661/67]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 12, 1939, 11.15 a.m.*

Angora telegram No. 216¹ and my telegram No. 178 to Angora.²

You should tell the French Government that we are doing our utmost to persuade the Turkish Government to withdraw their objections to the Declaration being made today in tripartite form. We hope that for their part they will without delay go as far as they possibly can to remove the misapprehensions under which the Turkish Government appear at present to be labouring as regards the Hatay settlement. (I have just received your telegram No. 204³ on this point.)

2. If however in spite of our combined efforts the Turkish Government remain obdurate, I feel that major political considerations will make it essential that Declaration should be made this afternoon in bilateral form at 3.45 p.m. English summer time.

3. In that case His Majesty's Government would if questioned state arrangements were being made for the Turkish and French Governments to make an analogous declaration in the near future.

Repeated to Angora.

¹ No. 497.

² No. 500.

³ No. 498.

No. 500

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora)
No. 178 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 3880/661/67]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 12, 1939, 11.15 a.m.*

Your telegram No. 215.¹

This is most unfortunate and you should inform the Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs at once that I am withholding announcement in House of Commons till 3.45 p.m. (English summer time) this afternoon in the hopes that there may be a chance for him to reach necessary arrangements today with the French Government. You should urge him to do his utmost to this end since we attach the utmost importance to the Declaration being made in tripartite form.

2. You may assure His Excellency that as far as I am concerned I will exert all influence in my power with the French Government to ensure that any arrangements which the Turkish and French Governments may reach over Hatay will be fully implemented.

3. Meanwhile the declaration will be made in bilateral form at 3.45 p.m. this afternoon unless I hear from you that agreement has been reached between the French and Turkish Governments for tripartite Declaration.

Repeated to Paris.

¹ No. 491.

No. 501

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 12, 1.15 p.m.)
No. 205 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 3924/661/67]

PARIS, May 12, 1939

Your telegram No. 199,¹ last paragraph.

The French Government agree and meanwhile M. Bonnet tells me that the French Ambassador at Angora is continuing to negotiate with the Turkish Government.

¹ No. 499.

No. 502

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax
(Received May 12, 1.30 p.m.)
No. 217 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 3925/661/67]

ANGORA, May 12, 1939

Your telegram No. 178.¹

I am seeing Minister for Foreign Affairs at once. In the meantime I should inform you that in discussing text of tripartite Declaration last night following point arose.

2. In paragraphs 2 and 3 mention is made of definitive long term agreement. Wording does not indicate whether such agreement will be bilateral or trilateral. Context rather tends to suggest the latter.

3. We agreed therefore that it might be possible, in reply to a question if asked, for it to be explained in Parliaments that this point still remains open and undecided.

4. You may wish to cover this point if trilateral declaration is made.
Repeated to Paris.

¹ No. 500.

No. 503

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax
(Received May 12, 3.5 p.m.)
No. 218 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 3929/661/67]

ANGORA, May 12, 1939

Your telegram No. 178.¹

It has proved impossible to reach agreement . . .² short time.

2. Declaration will therefore be made here in bilateral form.

3. In his speech Minister for Foreign Affairs alluded [*sic* ? will allude] to conversations in progress with the French Government which will reach an early conclusion.

¹ No. 500.

² The text is here uncertain.

No. 504

Viscount Halifax to Sir P. Loraine (Rome)

No. 246 Telegraphic [R 3658/7/22]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 12, 1939, 7-45 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 431,¹ paragraph 6.

I agree that recent developments indicate that there is a possibility that Signor Mussolini may, when he sees you, suggest that His Majesty's Government should intervene with active assistance with a view to a settlement of Franco-Italian problems. Alternatively it is conceivable that he may suggest a comprehensive Mediterranean settlement. In either case, you should try to draw Signor Mussolini as far as possible without, however, in any way committing His Majesty's Government.

Repeated to Paris.

¹ No. 370.

No. 505

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax
(Received May 13, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 219 Telegraphic [R 3964/661/67]

ANGORA, *May 12, 9.5 p.m.*

My telegram No. 218.¹

Immediately on receipt of your telegram No. 178² I saw Minister for Foreign Affairs and spoke as instructed. I induced him to send Secretary-General to my French colleague with a proposal from Turkish side. My French colleague agreed to receive him.

2. Turkish proposal which involved cession of Hatay by June 1 amongst other things, went much too far and result was as reported in my telegram under reference. My French colleague has promised me texts of discussions at his meeting with Secretary-General and I will inform you.

3. My French colleague has now withdrawn to position that nothing further can be done on his side and that Turks must make fresh proposals.

4. Both Secretary-General and Minister for Foreign Affairs on the other hand assured me that interview ended most amicably and that negotiations will be pursued immediately with good hope of early settlement, after which Franco-Turkish declaration will be possible.

Repeated to Paris.

¹ No. 503.

² No. 500.

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax
(Received May 13, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 221 Telegraphic [R 3965/661/67]

ANGORA, May 12, 1939, 11.47 p.m.

Prime Minister said¹ that Turkish policy had thus far been one of complete neutrality designed to keep the country as far as possible apart from international complications. When however trouble had spread to the Balkan and Mediterranean regions Turkey had no longer been able to remain neutral without jeopardising her own security. It was vital for Turkey that all states in Mediterranean should have free exercise of their rights without any encouragement being given to ideas of hegemony. In the circumstances Government considered best way of saving Turkey from war was to associate her with those countries which were united together for peace but not shrinking from war if necessary. For that reason he was asking the Assembly to approve association of Turkey and Great Britain in defence of peace and security—an association directed against none and nourishing no aims of encirclement but designed rather to ward off catastrophe of war.

2. After emphasising close and cordial nature of Anglo-Turkish relations the Prime Minister described how consultations between the two Governments, undertaken as a result of recent disquieting happenings in Europe, had led to Declaration which he then proceeded to read.

3. M. Refik Saydam expressed conviction that Declaration, together with subsequent agreements foreshadowed in it, would help notably to weigh down the scales on the side of peace. Policy of Turkey and her ally was to keep peace and to attack the rights of no one. In pursuit of peace Turkish Government would continue to exert every effort; but they would not hesitate firmly to oppose by force of arms any threat to the common rights and interests of Great Britain and Turkey.

4. Further points were:

(a) friendly conversations were proceeding with France with a view to conclusion of agreements similar to those with Great Britain.

(b) closest touch was being maintained with U.S.S.R. Visit of M. Potemkin had shewn that Turkish and Soviet views were in complete harmony.

(c) It was to be hoped that Turkish relations with Balkan allies would continue to be as cordial as ever and that Balkan Entente, in which Turkey's role remained unchanged, might be further enlarged and fulfil a still more useful function.

Repeated to Paris, Athens, Belgrade, Bucharest, Sofia, Moscow, Rome, Cairo and Warsaw.

¹ i.e. in his speech to the Grand National Assembly announcing the Anglo-Turkish Declaration.

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 15)

No. 46 Saving: Telegraphic [C 7095/54/18]

WARSAW, May 12, 1939

As Mr. Hankey¹ had to go to Gdynia with archives to be returned to England I asked him to report on local situation in Danzig and Corridor. He saw yesterday British Vice-Consul, Gdynia, His Majesty's Consul-General, Danzig, American Consul, Danzig and Deputy Polish Commissioner-General. Conclusions seem to be as follows.

2. It is impossible to foresee what further political action if any Danzig Senate are likely to take. Decision depends entirely on orders given from Berlin. Danzig officials and also Gauleiter's newspaper say that a referendum is unnecessary as wishes of the population are well-known.

3. It is equally impossible to foresee when any further action might be taken.

4. It is apparently a commonplace of conversation of Danzig officials that Danzig and Corridor must be settled together and that complete return of Danzig is inevitable in the end. The moderates are only in less of a hurry.

5. Polish Commissary [Commissioner]-General feels that concession made in present circumstances would be read as a sign of weakness and be used to extort further concessions later. All observers agree that cession of Danzig would give Germany a strangle-hold on Poland's foreign trade while remilitarization would place Gdynia and the Corridor at Germany's mercy.

6. A German military *coup* on the Free City from East Prussia seems unlikely unless large scale military action is contemplated. The only bridge over the Vistula is at Tczew in Polish territory and is almost certainly mined. Other roads via Vistula ferries are narrow and surrounding country which is very marshy would probably be flooded by bursting dykes in Polish territory. In a race for Danzig Polish army could easily be the first to occupy hills overlooking Danzig from the West and probably Danzig itself if street fighting were not too severe. City is within range of Polish guns.

7. Polish Commissary considers Danzig still effectively demilitarized and though police in fact receive infantry training there are no fortifications.

8. There is no outward evidence of any extensive Polish military preparations round Free City territory but forests are guarded against observers. (? Aeroplane)² from Danzig to Gdynia is now deflected inland.

9. In short a political rather than a military approach to Danzig problem is thought locally to be most likely unless large-scale military action is contemplated by Germany.

Repeated to Berlin and Danzig.

¹ Mr. Hankey was Second Secretary at His Majesty's Embassy in Warsaw.

² The text is here uncertain.

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 12, 1939

Sir,

The Polish Ambassador asked to see me this morning on the subject of financial assistance to Poland. Count Raczynski said that this question had been raised in a general way by M. Beck with Sir H. Kennard on the 23rd April,¹ and that M. Beck had been hoping to receive a general reply. The matter had now become one of great urgency. The Polish Government were obliged to keep the country in a state of preparation for war, and the number of troops on a war footing was in the neighbourhood of a million. They further desired to extend their armed forces and make use of their reserves of man-power, but were held up not so much for want of rifles, but of other equipment required for a modern division. Finally, they wished to extend their war potential, and for this purpose they required supplies of raw materials and machine tools. They were under the double necessity of spending large sums of money in Poland itself, and of importing raw materials and finished products which had to be paid for in foreign exchange. Count Raczynski handed me a memorandum containing Poland's *desiderata*, which, he said, had been very carefully studied by the Polish Ministers concerned. If His Majesty's Government were prepared to entertain the Polish Government's request, the Polish Government desired to send a mission to London.

2. Count Raczynski was instructed to add that the Polish requirements were on a very large scale, and that the sum they had in mind was in the neighbourhood of £60 million.

3. I told Count Raczynski that I would lose no time in communicating what he had told me to the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The intimation given to Your Excellency by M. Beck on the 23rd April had not been lost sight of, and I had already been in consultation with the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the subject. Count Raczynski's representations would reinforce both the urgency and the importance of the matter. It went without saying that His Majesty's Government would wish to do anything in their power to assist Poland, but I was alarmed at the figure which he had mentioned. The Chancellor of the Exchequer was faced with great difficulties in view of the financial commitments which His Majesty's Government had incurred and the necessity of holding the exchange value of the £. The situation was not free from anxiety.

4. In reply to a question, Count Raczynski said that the Polish Government had already made an approach to the French Government, and conversations were taking place. In addition to the request which they were making to His Majesty's Government the Polish Government were proposing

¹ See No. 273.

to raise a large sum of money in Poland, which they hoped would be in the neighbourhood of £40 million. The Ambassador thought that the Polish Government were asking the French Government for assistance to the amount of some £20 million.

5. M. Beck had asked the Ambassador to emphasise that it was extremely important to have a reply most urgently to his representations. The Polish Government were determined, irrespective of whether they received assistance from abroad, to make strenuous efforts and to continue their preparations, but the stringency which was already apparent was having an unfavourable reaction in Poland itself.

6. In conclusion, I mentioned the questions of security, and of the service and repayment of any financial assistance which it was possible to give. Count Raczynski said that the Polish mission would be in a position to discuss these matters. He did not think that all the money would be needed at once, and that it might be possible to set up some kind of revolving fund.

I am, &c.,

HALIFAX

ENCLOSURE IN NO. 508

Aide-Mémoire

LONDRES, le 12 mai 1939

I. Le Gouvernement polonais est en train d'accomplir un effort maximum pour maintenir l'état de préparation militaire de la Pologne au niveau commandé par les circonstances. Cet effort sera poursuivi indépendamment du fait que ce Gouvernement reçoive ou non une assistance financière du dehors. Toutefois le maintien de cette préparation au niveau actuel durant une période prolongée, la nécessité de mettre sans délai l'économie nationale à même de faire face aux exigences d'ordre militaire, et d'autant plus une augmentation très désirable du nombre des grandes unités de guerre disponibles, augmentation possible grâce à l'importance du contingent des hommes entraînés militairement, dépassent les ressources financières actuelles de la Pologne.

Dans ces conditions, la sauvegarde d'intérêts communs de la plus haute importance exige impérieusement qu'une assistance financière de grande envergure soit obtenue par la Pologne.

II. Cette assistance devrait s'étendre :

- (a) à des crédits financiers;
- (b) à des crédits pour achat de matériel.

III. Les crédits financiers seraient destinés :

- (a) à couvrir les dépenses extraordinaires causées par le maintien, probablement prolongé, de l'état actuel de mobilisation partielle;
- (b) à la formation et l'équipement de nouvelles grandes unités de réserve;

- (c) aux moyens nécessaires à la mise en exploitation à plein rendement de l'industrie de guerre nationale;
- (d) à l'exécution de certains travaux d'utilité publique possédant une valeur stratégique (travaux de fortifications, ponts, routes, matériel roulant);
- (e) pour financer la création de réserves de matières premières produites en Pologne, à leur transport et à leur stockage dans des districts moins vulnérables au point de vue stratégique;
- (f) à l'achat de stocks de matières premières d'origine étrangère (ferraille, minerais, métaux colorés, caoutchouc, coton, laine, &c.) qui ne pourraient pas être achetées à crédit;
- (g) à l'achat de matériel de guerre qui en règle générale se paye au comptant;
- (h) pour financer des achats de matières premières et de matériel de guerre au cas où, les hostilités ayant éclaté, les voies de communication normales avec les pays alliés se trouveraient coupées; et
- (i) finalement — à l'accroissement des moyens de paiement de l'État polonais, fortement atteints par suite de la dépression prolongée et les dépenses déjà causées par les préparatifs militaires actuels.

IV. Des crédits pour achat de matériel sont indispensables:

- (a) pour pourvoir l'industrie de guerre polonaise d'une série de machines et d'installations qui lui font encore défaut;
- (b) à l'achat de machines et d'installations destinées à l'industrie privée et qui sont nécessaires pour l'adapter à la production de guerre ou à une production ayant trait aux besoins militaires;
- (c) à l'achat de machines et d'installations destinées à nouveaux établissements industriels d'intérêt militaire, en voie de construction dans des zones non vulnérables au point de vue stratégique;
- (d) à l'achat de produits demi-manufacturés et de certaines matières premières dont l'acquisition pourrait être traitée comme importation de marchandises dans le cadre de l'Export Credit Guarantee.

Étant donné les possibilités d'utilisation pratique dudit crédit en marchandises, il pourrait être mis à la disposition de la Pologne par tranches.

Il va sans dire qu'à part le renforcement du potentiel militaire qui résulterait de l'obtention des crédits susmentionnés, le seul fait d'une assistance financière extérieure aurait une grande signification morale et psychologique. Ce fait renforcerait le sentiment de sécurité sur le marché monétaire, arrêterait le reflux des capitaux et restaurerait la possibilité d'un financement plus normal de la vie économique du pays.

Au cas où le Gouvernement de Sa Majesté britannique partagerait les vues exposées ci-dessus, le Gouvernement polonais serait prêt à envoyer à Londres une délégation munie de pleins pouvoirs afin d'examiner de concert avec les autorités britanniques le plan dont il a été question plus haut, dans son ensemble et dans ses parties composantes.

*Sir W. Seeds (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 19)**No. 143 [N 2547/233/38]*

MOSCOW, May 12, 1939

My Lord,

The news, which leaked out late in the evening of the 3rd May, that M. Litvinov had been relieved of his duties as People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs and had been replaced in that post by M. Molotov, the President of the Council of People's Commissars, came as a complete surprise to diplomatic circles and foreign press correspondents in Moscow. I had had an interview with M. Litvinov on that very morning (he had said that it was not possible for him to receive me in the afternoon) and, as I reported in my telegram No. 81¹ of the 4th May, he gave me no inkling of his impending retirement. I assume that he saw M. Stalin in the afternoon and that his resignation, or, as it would seem more accurate to describe it, his dismissal, followed.

2. There would appear to be three possible explanations for the removal of M. Litvinov at this particular juncture from an office which he has held since 1930, and for what, to judge by precedents in the case of Soviet officials who have been 'relieved of their duties at their own request', is likely to be the final severance of his close connexion for the past twenty-one years with the foreign affairs of the Soviet Union. Before considering these explanations, however, I feel that it is necessary to point out that rumours of M. Litvinov's retirement have been current at regular intervals for years past, and that such rumours were revived in a particularly strong form after the Munich Agreement last year. Nevertheless, as Lord Chilton stated in his despatch No. 442² of the 5th October, 1938, it seemed hardly possible then to contemplate that the services of M. Litvinov, who appeared to be irreplaceable, would be dispensed with.

3. To return to the possible reasons for M. Litvinov's removal from office, the first of these that most readily came to the mind is that referred to in my telegram No. 83³ of the 4th May, namely, that, coming as it did while the negotiations with His Majesty's Government and the French Government were still in progress, it might imply the abandonment of the policy of collective security, with which M. Litvinov has for so long been so closely associated, and a decision to enter instead on a policy of isolation, which, to judge from M. Stalin's speeches, has in the past more closely represented the latter's predilection. I was inclined from the first not to adopt this view too readily, and all the evidence which has been accumulating in the past week would seem to show that the Soviet Government are for the moment still prepared to pursue a policy of collaboration, to a degree which may be found embarrassing, with the forces opposed to aggression. Even if one discounts, and I see no reason to do so, the official assurances given by M. Potemkin in Angora and Warsaw, M. Suritz in Paris, M. Maisky in London and M. Molotov here in

¹ No. 353.² Not printed.³ No. 359.

Moscow, that no change in policy is contemplated, and even if one attaches no particular significance to the appointment of Soviet Representatives at Bucharest and Warsaw after these posts had so long remained vacant, there is no real evidence yet that the Soviet Government intend to retreat from the proposals made to His Majesty's Government and the French Government on the 18th April, or that, as is gloomily prophesied in certain quarters, they are preparing to come to terms with the Axis Powers. It may be held that, by putting forward their proposals in a form which is difficult of acceptance by His Majesty's Government and the French Government, a way of retreat is being prepared; but I would hesitate to endorse this view at present, though I would again draw attention to the cryptic remark made to me by M. Molotov on the 8th May, and reported in my telegram No. 87⁴ of that date, to the effect that Soviet policy was liable to alteration if other States changed theirs.

4. There remain two further possible reasons for M. Litvinov's departure from the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs. The first of these, which cannot be excluded in a country where all is submitted to the will of one man, is that M. Litvinov gave some offence to M. Stalin, either by his too-energetic advocacy of a certain policy or by a failure to anticipate certain developments, that an intrigue developed against him and that he was summarily dismissed. When it is remembered that no account was taken in this country of the effect that the State trials and wholesale 'purges' of recent years were likely to have abroad, there is no reason to suppose that the effect on foreign opinion of M. Litvinov's dismissal at this juncture need have been taken into account. In this connexion it cannot too clearly be emphasised that M. Litvinov, though a member of the Central Committee of the Communist party, has never been included in the inner councils of the régime, has never been a member of the all-powerful Politbureau, and was in charge of a commissariat which has long held a position of secondary importance. He has never been liked by M. Stalin, who, however, has somewhat reluctantly had to recognise his technical qualifications; and the position he held in this country was by no means commensurate with that which he enjoyed abroad as one of the best known of Soviet personalities. In the Soviet Union his name was seldom brought before the public at large, and it may well be that, by shunning rather than courting publicity and by strictly adhering to his role of a subordinate technical adviser in a limited sphere, he managed to maintain his position for so long and to avoid the fate which has befallen so many of his colleagues in the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs.

5. The third possible explanation of M. Litvinov's removal from office is that at this moment, when the international situation can justifiably be said to expose the Soviet Union to greater danger than it has been in for years past, M. Stalin desires to bring the conduct of foreign affairs more closely under the control of the Kremlin and that for this purpose he chose to appoint as People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs M. Molotov, who is the second man in the régime and who has M. Stalin's complete confidence. As I have

⁴ No. 421.

indicated in the preceding paragraph, the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs has hitherto been a post of secondary importance, and Soviet foreign policy has been conducted through the intermediary of a figure who, in Soviet eyes, was also of minor rank.

6. The decision to remove M. Litvinov may have been taken some time ago, and the fact that it was announced at this particular moment may represent a somewhat clumsy attempt to influence the conclusion of the negotiations with the French Government and His Majesty's Government, whose delay in replying to the Soviet proposals of the 18th April was undoubtedly unwelcome to the Soviet Government. It may even be that M. Litvinov was too confident in believing that His Majesty's Government were prepared to accept in principle the Soviet proposals of the 18th April, subject to certain minor modifications, and that M. Maisky, on returning to London on the 29th April after his visit to Moscow, was already in a position to report that those proposals were unacceptable. If this was the case, it cannot be ruled out that M. Litvinov was held responsible by M. Stalin for pushing forward too quickly. It is true that M. Litvinov cannot be considered ever to have pursued a policy independently of the wishes of the Kremlin or to have been much more than an able mouthpiece for the policy adopted by the Politbureau; but he had, no doubt, a considerable influence, by the manner in which he presented a case, in helping to formulate policy, and, as indicated above, he may have been too active in advocating a certain line or have failed to anticipate correctly the effect it would have.

7. It is probable that the real reasons for M. Litvinov's dismissal will never come to light or will only emerge after a considerable interval, though I am disposed to think that the three explanations I have advanced may each have had something to do with it. However this may be, I can only deplore his departure from the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs, both on personal and on official grounds. Since I have been at this post I have always found him most satisfactory to deal with, and I fear that his replacement by M. Molotov will make matters difficult for myself and my colleagues.

8. It does not seem to me possible that M. Molotov can adequately discharge both his manifold existing duties in the Government and party, as M. Stalin's right-hand man, and his new duties in the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs. He knows, or rather speaks, no foreign language, has, so far as I am aware, never been outside Russia, and has no practical experience in the conduct of foreign affairs or knowledge of the psychology of foreign countries. I fear, therefore, that access to him will be rare and that foreign representatives in Moscow will, in effect, be compelled to transact business to a large extent with M. Potemkin, who, as I reported in my telegram No. 84^s of the 7th May, is clearly being maintained in his position as first assistant to the People's Commissar, but who is not of M. Litvinov's calibre.

9. These difficulties, it is true, may to some extent be only temporary, since I cannot believe that M. Molotov will really long be able to carry out effectively the duties of his various offices; but even if he retires from the

^s No. 406.

Commissariat for Foreign Affairs in due course, it will be extraordinarily hard to find a suitable successor to M. Litvinov. It is being said that M. Potemkin may be appointed to the post—and here I would remark that it is at least curious that the latter should have been absent in Angora when M. Litvinov's retirement took place—and he, at any rate, would have a good deal to recommend him. But I fear that the Commissariat may possibly fall under the influence of some obscure nominee or nominees of M. Stalin. In this connexion it appears to be established that a M. V. G. Dekanozov has been introduced into the Commissariat and may, as in the case of M. Beriia at the Commissariat for Internal Affairs, be undergoing a period of training or trial before receiving a definitive appointment, possibly as second assistant, if not as People's Commissar. This individual was formerly the People's Commissar for the Food Industry in Georgia and deputy chairman of the Georgian Council of People's Commissars—further apparent evidence of the 'Georgianisation' of public offices, to which I have recently drawn attention, and an indication that the Commissariat may possibly be destined to undergo a 'purge'.

10. It is not perhaps without significance that the head of the Press Bureau at the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs and one of his chief assistants have, within the last few days, been relieved of their posts (they may, of course, receive other employment); that the long-existing press censorship has been lifted on the understanding that foreign correspondents will be requested to leave this country if they send any messages which are considered to be derogatory to the prestige of the Soviet Union; and that, if we are to judge by the precedent of the article on the negotiations with His Majesty's Government in the 'Izvestiya' of the 11th May, summarised in my telegram No. 90⁶ of the 11th May and since widely reproduced verbatim in provincial newspapers, that newspaper may replace, as a vehicle for the expression of views on foreign policy, the 'Journal de Moscou', which ceased publication with its issue of the 30th April, and the leading articles of which were always considered to reflect closely the views of M. Litvinov. If, indeed, the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs is to be controlled more directly from the Kremlin, we may expect an even greater reluctance than in the past on the part of its officials to commit themselves on even the simplest and most inoffensive question, and in the broader sphere of negotiation a much less supple and more rigid attitude than that which was apparent when M. Litvinov was at the head of that Department.

11. In conclusion, I feel that I must refer briefly to the prospects M. Litvinov has of enjoying his liberty in retirement. Past precedents in the case of Soviet officials who have at their own request asked to be relieved of their duties do not bode happily for M. Litvinov, who must be the repository of many unwelcome and awkward secrets and who, I imagine, has not many friends in high places to speak well for him. Although nothing is really known as to his circumstances and whereabouts, it is believed that he is now living at his *dacha*, and I am told that he was seen at the theatre since he left

⁶ No. 481.

the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs. It may be, therefore, that if he maintains in retirement the discretion and circumspection which characterised his life in office he will, at any rate for the present, be left in peace. But I fear that a threat will always be hanging over him, as well as over his English-born wife, who, as is known, has for some time past been a teacher of English at Sverdlovsk.

I have, &c.,
WILLIAM SEEDS

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No. 510

Letter from Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Sir A. Cadogan
[C 7243/15/18]

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, *May 12, 1939*

My own information as regards Göring's health is not nearly so alarmist as what Bodenschatz said to the Polish Military Attaché (see a telegram of mine).¹

So far as I can make out G. has a form of diabetes and found an Italian doctor at San Remo in whom he has immense confidence. Hence his return there. There is on the other hand no doubt that he is out of favour with Hitler at the moment. But that does not mean that he will not one day be restored to it.

I believe in two months' pause provided no incident arises in the meantime. One cannot say more than that. And if it is an incident which can be used for Hitler's plans, use it he will: *vide* Schuschnigg, Benes and Father Tiso.

I cannot say what the real effect of the P.M.'s speech yesterday² will be but the first reactions are unfriendly and show determination not to try to understand our standpoint.

NEVILLE H.

¹ No. 377.

² Mr. Chamberlain addressed a mass meeting organized by the Central Women's Advisory Committee of the National Union of Conservative and Unionist Associations at the Albert Hall on May 11.

CHAPTER VII

The European situation: further correspondence with the Soviet Government: Anglo-Turkish negotiations: the Danzig question. (May 13–20, 1939.)

No. 511

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 13, 5.0 p.m.)
No. 159 Telegraphic [C 7055/54/18]

WARSAW, May 13, 1939, 2.50 p.m.

Polish press reports disorders in Danzig yesterday of an anti-Polish nature. Polish Government took immediate and energetic steps to prevent the Polish press from treating these incidents sensationally but newspapers this morning point out that in refusing to guarantee protection for the meeting the Danzig Senate have admitted inability to keep law and order.

2. Official of Ministry of Foreign Affairs said today that the Polish Government had delivered a strong protest to the Senate last night. They could not admit the Senate's right to disown the responsibility for the protection of an orderly and normal meeting of Polish citizens to commemorate Marshal Pilsudski's memory. Meeting had annually been held in the (same)¹ place, a sporting arena not in the centre of the town, and the rights of the Polish population . . .¹ guaranteed by many conventions.

Repeated to Berlin and Danzig.

¹ The text is here uncertain.

No. 512

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax
(Received May 13, 9.20 p.m.)

No. 222 Telegraphic [E 3547/143/44]

ANGORA, May 13, 1939, 5.20 p.m.

Your telegram No. 144,¹ paragraph 8.

Now that acquiescence in Stage 1 has been completed I submit following review of position as regards further proceedings.

2. Stage 2. I hope it will be possible for you to send me draft of interim understanding at an early date. Minister for Foreign Affairs asked me about it yesterday and is evidently anxious to proceed with rapidity.

3. Stage 3. Subjects included in this may be divided into two categories

¹ No. 310.

(a) those which can be proceeded with at once without awaiting conversations here or in London, (b) those to be covered by conversations.

Under (a) I place specifically orders for war material and request for assistance in military preparations. As to these I have already informed Turkish Government of forthcoming despatch of gun turrets announced in your telegram No. 153² and I trust I may shortly receive instructions as to the other items mentioned in my telegram No. 168.³ It would seem even more important to give Turkish Government early answer on my telegram No. 150⁴ (guns and coast defence mountings etc. for the Straits). As regards my telegram No. 161⁵ (paragraphs 1 and 2) (? four)⁶ Turkish officers have now left to visit Maginot line and I will now ask Minister for Foreign Affairs again whether he has sent necessary instructions to Turkish Embassy. Under this category would also be included list of Turkish requirements mentioned in my telegram No. 183⁷ and my despatch No. 245.⁸ This list has been modified by Turkish General Staff and arranged in order of priority. I hope to receive revised list very soon and will send by first opportunity. If necessary I will telegraph essential items.

Under (b) I would place all general matters referred to under point 5 in my telegram No. 163.⁹ I have now received your (? despatch No. 180)¹⁰ and am informing Minister for Foreign Affairs at once. Beyond that I would only submit that now that Declaration has been made it may be necessary to be prepared for merciless policy of reaction by Germany such as cutting off of war material or of markets. Minister for Foreign Affairs has on several occasions recently repeated his reliance on us to supply these deficiencies. As to financial assistance his attitude is expressed in paragraph 8 of my telegram No. 209.¹¹

4. Stage 4. No comment at present beyond that Turkish Government appear to contemplate some public statement after final conclusion (see my telegram No. 159¹² point 3 at end of paragraph 4).

² Not printed.

³ Not printed. This telegram referred to equipment not yet delivered for Blenheim aircraft purchased by the Turkish Government.

⁴ Not printed. In this telegram Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen stressed the importance of the point raised in paragraph 2 of his telegram No. 147 (No. 239).

⁵ Not printed.

⁶ The text is here uncertain.

⁷ Not printed.

⁸ Not printed. This despatch transmitted a list of Turkish military requirements.

⁹ No. 286.

¹⁰ Not printed. This despatch enclosed the text of the Prime Minister's statement on April 13.

¹¹ No. 456.

¹² No. 271.

No. 513

Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)

No. 161 Telegraphic [C 6914/54/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 13, 1939, 6.0 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 370¹ and my telegram No. 155².

1. I still think it desirable that you should speak as authorised to members of the Higher Command if an opportunity offers, and indeed in any other useful quarter. You will now have seen terms of Prime Minister's statement about Danzig in his speech yesterday.³ This will give you a further indication of the language you should use.

2. Procedure which you contemplated, as described in your telegram No. 370, would have given our action a character rather different from that which I had in mind. I should prefer that action should be taken by yourself rather than by your Military Attaché; and it would not in any event be advisable to leave any written statement.

3. Amendments you suggest would, I fear, rob our words of a good deal of their effect. If, therefore, an opportunity should occur for you to act on my telegram No. 150,⁴ I hope that you will, as far as possible, model your language as closely as may be on its terms.

Repeated to Rome.

¹ No. 475.

² No. 476.

³ The reference appears to be to Mr. Chamberlain's speech on May 11. See No. 510, note 2.

⁴ No. 431.

No. 514

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax

(Received May 14, 10.0 a.m.)

No. 225 Telegraphic [R 3981/661/67]

ANGORA, *May 13, 1939, 8.26 p.m.*

My telegram No. 219.¹

Following are translations of texts discussed between Turkish Government and my French colleague with additional information given by him.

2. A. Text referred to in first paragraph of my telegram No. 216.²

'French and Turkish Governments agree to conclude before June 20, 1939 a definite arrangement having for object the cession by France, in so far as she is concerned, of territory of Hatay to Turkey.'

(My French colleague explains that in respect of it it was (? clear)³ that important differences of view existed with regard to *modalités* of cession).

3. B. Text proposed by Secretary General on May 12 (see my telegram No. (? 221)).⁴

¹ No. 505.

² No. 497.

³ The text is here uncertain.

⁴ No. 506, but the reference appears to be to telegram No. 219 (No. 505).

'French Government accept in so far as it is concerned the cession of Hatay to Turkey on June 1, 1939.

'Without prejudice to above provision, Turkish Government accept on its side to conclude with France an agreement destined to settle amicably the questions connected with this territorial cession.'

4. C. Text proposed by French Ambassador in substitution for B.

'French and Turkish Governments will conclude before June 20 a treaty

(a) Providing for cession by France in so far as she is concerned of Hatay to Turkey.

(b) Settling amicably the question[s] connected with this cession.'

In proposing this text French Ambassador emphasized that the last five words of B should be understood as not excluding *a priori* any of questions of which he had spoken during preliminary conversations.

Secretary-General on the other hand gave the formula a restrictive interpretation. He also asked for the insertion of the word 'immediate' before 'cession' in A.

5. French Ambassador then realised that it was impossible to reach a solution in a few hours and conversation was broken off.

6. I met my French colleague at dinner on May 12. He said that breakdown of this conversation had made the position much worse and that he would do nothing more. The Turks must come forward with some proposal.

Repeated to Paris.

No. 515

Minute by Mr. Ingram

[R 4036/661/67]

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 13, 1939

The Greek Minister came to see me this morning to say that he had been instructed to inform us of the gist of a telegram which had been received here from the Greek Legation in Angora. According to this telegram the German Ambassador was very worried by recent developments in Turkey which he had been unable to prevent. M. Saracoglu had told the Greek Minister in Angora that he had visaed the passport of Herr von Papen for Germany 15 days after his arrival. Von Papen had told M. Saracoglu of the intention to present a scheme for completing the Balkan Entente by the participation of Bulgaria and Albania (to be represented by Italy) and a subsequent guarantee of Balkan frontiers by Germany. This scheme, so far as the Greek Minister in Angora knew, had provoked a smile in those official circles which had been sounded.

The Greek Minister, although he had not been so instructed, also read to me the gist of a telegram from Rome regarding the Venice conversations. At the Palazzo Chigi the Greek Minister in Rome had been told that the results had been clearly explained in the communiqué and that all the

other rumours, for example as regards Yugoslavia joining the Axis or the Anti-Comintern Pact, were simply the results of imagination. So far as Hungarian-Yugoslav relations were concerned, there seemed to be greater comprehension between the two Governments of Belgrade and Budapest and it was to be hoped that an understanding would emerge. From other information which the Greek Minister in Rome had received from diplomatic sources, the conversations between the Italians and Yugoslavs had not reached the suspected point and the door of collaboration between Yugoslavia and the rest of the Balkan Entente did not seem completely to have been closed. The Yugoslav Minister in Rome was always very 'boutonné'. The Hungarian Minister there seemed satisfied with the progress of the conversations between Yugoslavia and Hungary but was also very reserved with regard to the possibility of eventual signature of any agreement. Anyhow, according to him, the atmosphere was satisfactory whether an agreement were signed or not. The Greek Minister in Belgrade had had a conversation with the Yugoslav Foreign Minister who said that he had returned satisfied from Venice and Berlin since the atmosphere was cleared and neither the Italian nor the German Government had expressed any feelings against Yugoslavia or the Balkan Entente. The question of joining the Axis was not put to him either directly or indirectly. M. Markovitch had made it clear that the whole policy of Yugoslavia was inspired by the decision to maintain neutrality in the differences between the great Powers should a general conflagration take place and as long as Yugoslavia's own interests were not touched. As regards Hungary, M. Markovitch was hopeful that the Roumanian Foreign Minister's conversation in Rome had contributed to a clear elucidation of the situation so far as Yugoslavia was concerned. When M. Gafencu returned to Bucharest he would try to settle in a satisfactory way the differences which existed with Hungary so as to satisfy Count Ciano also. It was M. Markovitch's impression that in Italy there existed a desire to avoid by all means a rupture with England and that as far as France was concerned Italy did not seem to have advanced any territorial claims.

I told the Greek Minister that we could confirm nearly all of the above information which tallied with our own.

E. M. B. INGRAM

No. 516

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)

No. 1183 [R 3930/661/67]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 13, 1939*

Sir,

The French Ambassador called at this Department on the 11th May, and communicated the contents of a telegram which he had received from his Government with reference to the negotiations between His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom and the Turkish Government for the conclusion of a guarantee agreement. This message showed that the French

Government had received information corresponding to that received by His Majesty's Government, (please see Sir Hughe Knatchbull-Hugessen's telegram No. 204¹ of the 10th May to Foreign Office, repeated to Your Excellency), regarding the protest made by the Yugoslav Government against the conclusion by Turkey of this agreement.

2. M. Cambon [*sic* ? Corbin] enquired what view had been taken here of this protest. In reply it was explained that it was regarded as serious, perhaps not so much in itself as for what it implied. Nevertheless there was no intention of allowing it to interfere with the negotiations with Turkey, and it was hoped to announce the Anglo-Turkish, or, if that could be arranged, the tripartite Anglo-French-Turkish Declaration on the 12th May.

I am, &c.,

HALIFAX

¹ No. 440.

No. 517

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax
(Received May 31)

No. 257 [R 4456/661/67]

ANGORA, May 13, 1939

My Lord,

As instructed by Your Lordship's telegram No. 144¹ of the 29th April, I communicated to the Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs the views of His Majesty's Government regarding the manner in which the present Anglo-Turkish negotiations should proceed. These observations were embodied in a '*communication orale*' of which I have the honour to transmit a copy herewith.²

2. On the 10th May I received, as reported in my telegram No. 209³ of that day, M. Sukru Saracoglu's reply in similar form; a copy of his communication is likewise enclosed, together with an additional document received by me on the 11th May.

3. Your Lordship will observe that the last paragraph under Point I of M. Saracoglu's communication deals with the question of including some reference to the Balkans in the Declaration to be made by His Majesty's Government and the Turkish Government. This point had, however, been satisfactorily resolved by the time that the document reached me, and I accordingly omitted mention of it from my telegram No. 209. The fact that this passage was no longer applicable is recognised in the communication of the 11th May, which was drawn up after consultation between the Secretary-General of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and myself.

I have, &c.,

H. M. KNATCHBULL-HUGESSEN

¹ No. 310.

² Not printed.

³ No. 456.

Communication Orale

Le Ministre des Affaires Étrangères a pris connaissance de la communication orale qui lui a été faite par Son Excellence Sir Hughe Knatchbull-Hugessen et il en a soumis la teneur à une étude dont les conclusions ont fait l'objet des délibérations gouvernementales.

M. Sukru Saracoglu est particulièrement heureux de constater qu'il existe entre les deux Gouvernements un accord d'ensemble sur le fonds de la question. La concordance de vues qu'il croit pouvoir préciser comme suit lui permet de déclarer que la procédure en quatre étapes, suggérée par le Gouvernement de Sa Majesté, est acceptée par le Gouvernement de la République.

I — L'interprétation donnée par le Foreign Office aux mots 'cette dernière Puissance' est tout à fait correcte et le mot 'dernière' doit évidemment être supprimé de la phrase exprimant la collaboration Turco-Britannique dans l'éventualité d'une guerre méditerranéenne.

En ce qui concerne la déclaration publique, le Gouvernement Turc est d'accord avec son contenu ci-inclus auquel il a apporté quelques modifications de forme.

Les considérations se rapportant à l'exclusion du texte de la déclaration publique de l'idée exprimée dans le point II ci-dessous reçoivent également l'adhésion du Gouvernement Turc.

II — Le Ministre des Affaires Étrangères comprend de son côté les raisons pour lesquelles le Gouvernement Britannique donne sa préférence marquée au texte antérieur sans l'adjonction proposée par le Gouvernement Turc.

Il pense que pendant les conversations relatives à l'élaboration de l'acte définitif, cette question peut être utilement débattue et qu'il ne serait proba[b]lement pas difficile de lui donner une forme satisfaisante pour les deux Parties.

III — M. Saracoglu a pris acte de la précision apportée par le Gouvernement Britannique à la question de l'assistance Anglo-Soviétique. Il continue, toutefois, à espérer qu'un arrangement intervienne à ce sujet dans l'intérêt supérieur de la paix.

IV — Accord complet sur cette question.

V — Tout en constatant l'accord des deux Gouvernements sur ce point, le Ministre des Affaires Étrangères croit devoir relever qu'il n'a pas donné à la phrase finale du point V de la communication Britannique une signification de réserve.

VI — Ainsi qu'il a été dit au début de cette communication le Gouvernement Turc est d'accord pour l'adoption de la procédure suggérée par le Gouvernement Britannique. Cet accord règle les objections soulevés au point VI dans le sens désiré par Sir Hughe Knatchbull-Hugessen.

ANKARA, le 11 mai 1939

Le Ministre des Affaires Étrangères faisant suite à sa communication orale remise le 10 mai 1939 au matin, et se référant au dernier alinéa du point I de ladite communication a l'honneur de porter à la connaissance de Son Excellence Sir Hughe Knatchbull-Hugessen qu'en ce qui concerne la considération émise audit paragraphe, M. Sukru Saracoglu confirme qu'un accord est intervenu entre les deux Gouvernements au sujet de l'insertion dans la déclaration commune convenue et comme 6ème point de cette déclaration de la formule suivante:

'Les deux Gouvernements reconnaissent qu'il est aussi nécessaire d'assurer l'établissement de la sécurité dans les Balkans et sont en consultation afin d'atteindre ce but le plus rapidement possible.'

No. 518

Mr. Troutbeck (Prague) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 20)
No. 173 [C 7362/53/18]

PRAGUE, May 13, 1939

My Lord,

I have the honour to inform you that the appointment of the new Czech Government, whose membership was reported in my telegram No. 88, Saving,¹ of the 28th April, caused some surprise in Prague. A change of Government had, indeed, been anticipated for some time, but it was thought that a more or less clean sweep would be made of the former Ministers. When, therefore, little more was done than to reappoint the old Government, there were those who saw in this some confirmation of their fears that the days of the Protectorate were numbered. They argued that if the Germans intended to organise the Protectorate on a permanent basis, they would see to it that it had a Government of new men selected for their pro-German outlook, such as could not be said of all the gentlemen now reappointed as Ministers. The belief that the Protectorate will soon disappear and the Bohemian provinces be brought still more directly under German domination is not an uncommon one.

2. General Elias and his colleagues were formally received by the Reichsprotector on the 2nd May, and the usual protestations of loyalty and desire for collaboration were uttered. There was the suggestion of a sting in Freiherr von Neurath's reply. He recognised that the new conditions had come as a surprise to the majority of the Czech people, but added that it must be the Government's first task to bring the people to an understanding of what had occurred. The hint has been underlined in the local German papers, and suggests that the Germans may be beginning to realise the

¹ Not printed.

indigestible qualities of the Czech character. A recent renewal in the press of savage attacks on Dr. Benes and of warnings against 'Flüsterpropaganda'² point to the same conclusion.

3. In any case the Germans can hardly be deceived by the public utterances of Czech Ministers or the cringing servility of the controlled press into believing that the present state of affairs is pleasing to the Czechs. To see what the man in the street is thinking, it is only necessary to go to a cinema and hear the coughs and guffaws which greet Herr Hitler's appearance on the screen. Other indications are not wanting that Czech nationalist feeling is still alive. On the 7th May the remains of the Czech poet Macha were transferred to Prague from his grave in Leitmeritz. The occasion was treated as one of national solemnity. Huge crowds flocked to the Vysehrad where the ceremony was held, and the national flag was flown all over the city. The same spirit may be seen in the floral decoration of national monuments which has become quite a feature of life in Prague. I am told again that large demonstrations took place at Brunn on the 1st May, though without any untoward incidents occurring. It was perhaps through fear of incidents arising that the Czech authorities at the last moment cancelled the usual May Day celebrations throughout the country, for I have it on the best authority that the Government are feeling some apprehension lest the rising temper of the masses may lead to serious clashes. That a number of minor ones have already taken place is clear from the communiqué reported in my *Savingram* No. 98³ of the 5th May, and I have evidence that they are still going on. Hitherto they seem to have been started chiefly by drunken German soldiers and policemen.

4. I happened to meet the other day a former high official in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. He opened the conversation by expressing his congratulations on the decision of His Majesty's Government to introduce compulsory military service, and then went on to say that, though his countrymen had no option today but to do what they were told, they would never accept the present situation as final. The implication was that he hoped to see his country one day reinstated as a result of another world war. I have had other evidence that such thoughts are nourished in the minds of many patriotic Czechs, though what contribution they themselves hope to make to a new allied victory is more difficult to say. Stories are current of secret societies being formed, of former members of the air force escaping across the frontier in the hope of finding their way to England and so into the Royal Air Force, of plans being hatched to sabotage communications, of stores of arms having been secretly hidden before the Germans came in. There may well be some truth in such tales, for the Czechs have long experience of working underground, but I am not entirely convinced that their activities within the Protectorate would amount to much more than passive resistance so long as there was no cracking in the structure of the German authority. Nor am I convinced that spiritual resistance to the German influence goes the whole 100 per cent. through the Czech nation. A United States colleague, who

² i.e. 'whispering propaganda'.

³ Not printed.

lately visited Mährisch Ostrau, came back with the impression that the town had in effect been won over to Germany even before the occupation took place. Again, if it be true, as is said, that the Czech Fascists are being shown special favour by the German authorities, the implication is that their acceptance of German ideas is more sincere than that of the Government and of the 'National Community' with which they refuse to be associated. It is a little disconcerting too to learn on unimpeachable authority of Czechs lending their services to the Gestapo.

5. Nevertheless, when all allowance has been made for such aberrations, there can be little doubt of the general intense bitterness of Czech feeling against the Germans. Nothing else could, indeed, be expected in view of the utter contrast between the words and the deeds of the Germans in relation to the Protectorate. Herr Hitler in his Reichstag speech on the 28th April was as forthcoming towards the Czechs as any of them could have hoped, and Freiherr von Neurath echoes his sentiments. But Czech friends have spoken to me recently of the increasing ruthlessness of the German attitude, a fact which need cause no surprise when it is recalled that Karl Hermann Frank, a man of whom no good thing has ever been heard, holds the appointment not only of State Secretary to the Protector but of Chief of the S.S. and of the police in the Protectorate. Nor can any great measure of goodwill or of autonomy be expected under the shadow of the Gestapo, even if its representatives in Prague are, as appears to be the case, of a better stamp than their colleagues in Vienna, at any rate in the higher ranks.

6. On the administrative side, too, the promised autonomy seems to be little better than a sham. The press reported not long ago that the country was to be divided for administrative purposes into twenty counties ('Kreishauptmannschaften'), each of which would contain a number of districts ('Bezirke'). The heads of the counties ('Kreishauptmänner') would be subordinate to administrative chiefs in Prague and Brünn respectively, and the latter would be directly responsible to the Reichsprotector. I understand that these 'Kreishauptmänner,' all of whom are Germans from the Reich or Austria, do not in theory hold executive office, but act rather as supervisors. The system was introduced immediately after the occupation and was supposed to be merely a temporary measure. The fact that these officers have not only not been withdrawn, but have recently received new titles, shows that there is no intention of relaxing the control. On the contrary, the tendency seems to be to tighten it up. The former chief of police at Brünn, for example, has been replaced by a local Sudeten who now combines the office with a flourishing legal practice. The Czech customs officials in Moravia are, I learn, shortly to be replaced by Germans. Another example of the amount of autonomy allowed to the Czech Government may be seen in an announcement by the Protector on the 11th May in which he declared his decision to allot 20 million crowns to Czech poor relief. Reference has been made in previous despatches to the system of placing German commissars in the Czech banks and industrial undertakings.

7. All this might be less unendurable to the Czechs if it brought with it

some improvement in material conditions. But the occupation is having precisely the contrary effect, as will be seen from the Commercial Secretary's last monthly report to the Department of Overseas Trade,⁴ which I would commend to your notice. The economic situation is, indeed, deteriorating week by week.

8. So far as the organisation of the Czechs is concerned, the Committee of the National Community continues to show great activity, if the press is to be believed. Over 90 per cent. of the male population has now joined the 'National Community' and the people, according to a recent statement in the press, is shortly to be organised in 'estates'. Preparations are also being made to incorporate the whole youth of the nation, male and female, in a single organisation on a non-political basis. The chief occupations of the Government are said to be the preparation of the Jewish law, of measures to prevent a rise in prices and of a compulsory labour law. The Jewish law was to have been ready this week, but has been delayed. I am told that the reason is that the Protector has objected to a clause providing that Jewish industries, when bought out, should be handed over to Czechs. It is the German policy that the Jewish industries in the Protectorate should pass into German hands, a process which, I understand, has already begun.

9. One has the impression, however, that the public activities of the Czechs, which are recorded in the press, are of minor importance, and that their real life is being carried on underground. I have been told that Dr. Benes is once again something of a national hero, and that his recent speeches have been printed secretly here and widely distributed, all this in preparation for the day of liberation. But it is not very easy for a foreigner to know much of what is happening behind the scenes, and I find it difficult to decide in my own mind whether the Czechs possess that spark of the dare-devil which would make them a real thorn in the German side if ever 'Der Tag' should come. I have expressed doubts of it in an earlier paragraph, but I may be doing them an injustice. In any case the Germans would need a considerable number of troops to make sure of their continued submission, for it is quite clear that the iron has entered into their souls.

10. I am sending a copy of this despatch to His Majesty's Ambassador in Berlin.

I have, &c.,
J. M. TROUTBECK

⁴ Not printed.

No. 519

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 14, 3.0 p.m.)
No. 160 Telegraphic [C 7056/54/18]

My telegram No. 159.¹

WARSAW, May 14, 1939, 12.40 p.m.

Danzig expert at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs informs me that the High Commissioner [*sic* ? Polish Commissioner-General] has received from the

¹ No. 511.

Danzig Senate a reply to his protest regarding the recent anti-Polish disorders. The Senate while expressing their regret evade the question of the responsibility of the authorities in not preventing these disorders and draw attention to the ill-treatment of the German Minority in Poland.

Polish Government regard this reply as unsatisfactory and impertinent but they are certainly doing all they can to prevent undue excitement here.

Repeated to Berlin and Danzig.

No. 520

*Sir W. Seeds (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 15, 9.30 a.m.)
No. 93 Telegraphic [C 7065/3356/18]*

MOSCOW, May 15, 1939, 12.30 a.m.

Your telegram No. 99.¹

M. Molotov handed me Soviet reply tonight as follows:

'Soviet Government have given careful consideration to latest proposals of British Government which were communicated to them on May 8 and they have come to the conclusion that these proposals cannot serve as a basis for organisation of a front of resistance² against a further extension of aggression in Europe.

'This conclusion is based on the following considerations:

'1. The English proposals do not contain principle of reciprocity with regard to U.S.S.R. and place the latter in a position of inequality inasmuch as they do not contemplate an obligation by England and France to guarantee the U.S.S.R. in the event of a direct attack on the latter by aggressors, whereas England and France as well as Poland enjoy such a guarantee as a result of reciprocity which exists between them.

'2. English proposals only extend guarantee to Eastern European States bordering on U.S.S.R. to Poland and to Roumania, as a consequence of which north western frontier of U.S.S.R. towards Finland, Estonia and Latvia remains uncovered.

'3. On the one hand absence of guarantee to U.S.S.R. on the part of England and France in the event of a direct attack by aggressors and, on the other hand, fact that north western frontier of U.S.S.R. remains uncovered may serve to provoke aggression in the direction of Soviet Union.

'Soviet Government consider there are at least three indispensable conditions for creation of an effective barrier by pacific States against a further extension of aggression in Europe: (1) The conclusion between England and France and U.S.S.R. of an effective pact of mutual assistance against aggression; (2) The guaranteeing by these three Great Powers of States of Central and Eastern Europe threatened by aggression including also Latvia, Estonia

¹ No. 397.

² In the translation sent by bag on May 16 (see No. 530) the words 'of the pacific States' appear at this point.

and Finland. (3) The conclusion of a concrete agreement between England, France and U.S.S.R. as to forms and extent of assistance to be rendered materially³ to each other and to the guaranteed States, failing which (without such an agreement) there is a risk that, as experience of Czecho-Slovakia proved, pacts of mutual assistance may be ineffective.⁴

4. I thought it well to express regret at specific mention of Finland stating *inter alia* that we associated that country more with Scandinavia than with the Baltic States, quite apart from the fact that on our side of the Anglo-Soviet conversations we had never considered undertaking any commitments with regard to the last mentioned. It was most important that Finland should maintain neutrality on the same lines as Norway and Sweden: this could be assured if Finland were not reminded of certain unpleasant historical associations with Russia: newspaper reports that Finland had been mentioned in Anglo-Soviet conversations had already caused some emotion in that country and the whole situation needed delicate handling. M. Molotov listened attentively and only suggested that association of Great Britain and France with Soviet Union might weaken Finland's suspicions.

5. M. Molotov said that the main point of Soviet Government's reply was need for 'reciprocity'. When I asked whether we could assume that question of Baltic States was of less importance than that of laying down a more definite reciprocity in connexion with guarantee to Poland and Roumania he answered that each point of reply followed logically from its predecessor.

6. As regards Your Lordship's message about Geneva he thought he would not be able to go himself but Soviet Government would be properly represented on May 22.⁴

Repeated to Angora, Berlin, Bucharest, Paris, Warsaw and Helsingfors.

³ In the translation sent by bag on May 16 this word read 'mutually'.

⁴ For a fuller account of this conversation see No. 530.

No. 521

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora)

No. 185 Telegraphic [R 3566/661/67]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 15, 1939, 3.30 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 180.¹

We will continue to repeat to you the more important telegrams about our negotiations with the U.S.S.R. You will also find further information in our *intel* series telegrams.²

You are authorised to keep the Turkish Government informed at your discretion.

¹ No. 332.

² A series of circular telegrams addressed to certain Missions abroad containing information on the international situation.

No. 522

Mr. Gallienne (Tallinn) to Mr. Orde (Riga)

No. 4¹ Telegraphic [N 2471/64/63]

TALLINN, May 15, 1939, 4.57 p.m.

My telegram No. 3.²

Estonian Minister for Foreign Affairs asks me to make the following queries of His Majesty's Government:

1. Estonian Government understood from Scandinavian and Latvian sources that His Majesty's Government had no serious objections to German pact provided that it is clearly non-aggressive and does not contain provisions which might eventually lead to more far-reaching interpretation. Is this true?

2. In the course of negotiations with the Soviet Government has the possibility been considered that His Majesty's Government could in the case of a general conflagration exert influence on the Soviet Government to abstain from any aggressive policy towards Estonia?

Despatch by bag.³

Repeated to Foreign Office No. 4.

¹ This telegram was addressed as No. 4 to Riga and repeated as No. 4 to the Foreign Office, where it was received on May 15 at 5.40 p.m.

² Not printed. This telegram of May 13 summarized the draft terms of the German proposed non-aggression pact and the Estonian Government's counter-proposals, which had been communicated by the latter to Mr. Gallienne.

³ Not printed.

No. 523

Mr. Shepherd (Danzig) to Viscount Halifax

(Received May 16, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 41 Telegraphic [C 7150/54/18]

DANZIG, May 15, 1939, 10.50 p.m.

Warsaw telegram No. 146.¹

Although I concur generally in the conclusions, they disregard the potentially important possibility of the German occupation of Danzig from the sea, especially as there is believed to be a considerable naval force somewhere between Memel and Pillau which might support a political *coup* by bottling up and threatening the Polish navy and Gdynia.

2. Arrival in Danzig by motor bus or lorry during the past few weeks of numerous groups of men—mostly young—in civilian dress with hand-luggage who are described as tourists is believed to be the basis of the current rumour that three regiments of German infantry and one battalion of marines have been smuggled into Danzig.

3. Announcement of a parade through the town tonight of Danzig's S.S. followed tomorrow by a concert here by the band of the Königsberg S.S. is

¹ The reference appears to be in error for Warsaw telegram No. 46 Saving (No. 507).

probably responsible for the latest rumour that, under cover of this imported military strength, a *coup* by which Danzig will declare its determination to return to Germany, is imminent.

4. Although my consular colleagues and I agree that there appears recently to have been a considerable influx of seemingly strange males of military age into Danzig, we doubt the imminent (*sic*) rumour of a *coup*.²

5. A native of Danzig named Kleist, who is reputed to travel extensively in connexion with Herr von Ribbentrop's political activities, visited his uncle here on May 12 when he is reported to have mentioned in conversation that he expected the problem of Danzig to be settled about six weeks hence, when Poland would be so occupied by trouble fomented in Upper Silesia that Danzig could be united with Germany by a sudden *coup*.

Repeated to Berlin and Warsaw.

² The text here should perhaps read 'the imminency of the rumoured *coup*'.

No. 524

*Conversation between M. Burckhardt and Mr. Walters (League of Nations)*¹
[C 7196/92/55]

GENEVA, May 15, 1939

The High Commissioner in Danzig came to see me this afternoon to tell me that he had just received the visit of Dr. Krauel, the German Consul-General here. Dr. Krauel had just returned from Berlin and had telephoned to make an appointment to see M. Burckhardt at his country retreat twenty miles from Geneva.

The substance of what Dr. Krauel wished to say was that in Berlin they were somewhat puzzled as to why the High Commissioner did not go back to Danzig. Dr. Krauel asked, for instance, what was the legal basis for his absence. He went on to say that Herr Greiser had recently, in speaking to the Polish Representative in Danzig, stated that the Senate wanted the High Commissioner back, adding that he knew that this was the view of the German Government; and that in saying this Herr Greiser had gone beyond what he was really authorised to say. The German Government, said Dr. Krauel, could not now say that they desired the presence of the League High Commissioner in Danzig, but it was nevertheless a fact that they did desire it.

The High Commissioner replied that that was all very well, but what were the prospects of peace and quiet in Danzig? The post of High Commissioner seemed to him to be simply an 'enjeu' in a game which was being played out on what was really quite another plane. What of the story, for instance, of a forthcoming plebiscite? Dr. Krauel replied that the idea of a plebiscite had been abandoned, and that there would be a period of calm in Danzig which, he added, would be facilitated through the serious illness of Herr Forster. He even declared that from the constitutional point of view the High Com-

¹ This record was enclosed in a letter of May 15 from Mr. Walters to Mr. Randall and was received in the Foreign Office on May 17.

missioner would not be too much troubled, for there would be no fresh anti-constitutional decrees in the next months!

At some point in the conversation Dr. Krauel had mentioned that the High Commissioner had in fact been able to act as a moderating influence in Danzig; and it will be remembered that Herr Greiser had said to him that if he had not been absent after the Council in January, there would have been far fewer troubles between the Poles and the Danzigers. Dr. Krauel, however, ended by admitting that the real reason why they did not want any change in the position of the High Commissioner was that if this happened it would necessitate a direct German-Polish settlement, and this they were not at present ready to face.

F. WALTERS

PS. Dr. Krauel did not say that he was acting on instructions in seeking out M. Burckhardt, but I think we may take it for granted that this was so.

No. 525

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received May 16, 4.30 p.m.)
No. 374 Telegraphic [C 7202/54/18]

BERLIN, May 16, 1939, 2.40 p.m.

I took the opportunity yesterday of a visit to the Secretary of State¹ on another subject to speak to him in exact sense of your telegram No. 150² in regard to determination of His Majesty's Government to implement their guarantee to Poland if compelled to do so by German unilateral action in respect of Danzig or the Corridor.

I made, however, no reference to fact that I was aware that contrary opinions were held on this subject.

2. Though Secretary of State listened carefully he took no notes such as he usually does. He replied at once that he did not doubt for a moment that such in fact was the true position but he added spontaneously chief reason why many people in Germany were encouraged to believe that we were bluffing was our over-anxiety to search for allies everywhere to support our guarantee to Poland. Germans generally he said regarded that as a sign of weakness rather than of strength.

3. I told him that a mistaken view of that nature only added to the danger of the situation. Whatever the upshot of a Polish war might be, we were confident of winning in the end. If we were seeking allies against aggression it was solely in order to make it obvious that aggression would not pay. We thought therein lay the best chance of preventing an incident being engineered which might lead to world catastrophe from which Germany would be the principal sufferer. State Secretary replied that he did not take such a pessimistic view of the situation as I did. He hinted (possibly as a result of

¹ i.e. the State Secretary, Baron von Weizsäcker.

² No. 431.

Herr von Ribbentrop's absence in Italy) that he had recently been closer in touch with Herr Hitler than usual. He did not he said personally envisage any developments for several months during which Poland might have an opportunity of reflecting. Germany was quite calm, far more so than England which seemed to have infected even the Vatican with panic. The only immediate danger which he saw was in respect of Polish frontier incidents. The Poles throughout their history had more than once proved themselves to be 'amok' runners (he used the word in German) (? tending)³ to certain disaster and he feared that they might revert to type. Poles had over a million men under arms at the moment. Would it not help to ease the situation if she demobilized some of them? She had no money to pay for their upkeep unless it was being defrayed by her allies. It was, he asserted, His Majesty's Government who was on the contrary responsible for the present crisis and dangers inherent in it, since they had left the fate of Europe in the hands not only of Poles and the Polish Government but in those of a number of irresponsible Poles.

4. I told the State Secretary that in all this he failed to mention one vital cause of the whole trouble namely the German action in Prague last March and Herr Hitler's breach of faith with His Majesty's Government. Polish mobilization was the direct result of Germany's treatment of the Czechs and merely evidence of their determination not to submit to the same fate. The Vatican had its own sources of information and had not been inspired by London. If Germany wished to avoid frontier incidents let her look to her own side of the country, &c., &c.

5. Secretary of State's reply was to give renewed expression of his confident belief in a pause during the summer months and to urge very strongly that we should take advantage of it to instil a little sense into the Poles. For once he allowed himself to speak heatedly when making this last remark.

Repeated to Warsaw.

³ The text is here uncertain.

No. 526

Sir R. Campbell (Belgrade) to Viscount Halifax

(Received May 17, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 113 Telegraphic [R 4102/661/67]

BELGRADE, May 16, 1939, 9.50 p.m.

Yugoslav press is re-printing extensively German comments on the Anglo-Turkish Agreement and such articles as have appeared by Yugoslav writers are inclined to be coloured by German views.

2. The British point of view has had little or no publicity, whether because of failure on the part of Yugoslav correspondents in London or Reuters to report it, or because of the censorship here, it is impossible to say.

3. I shall speak strongly to the Minister for Foreign Affairs as soon as possible, but in the meantime could you arrange to explain the British point of view to Yugoslav correspondents, particularly Milojevitch of the 'Politika'?

4. If you will telegraph brief outline of the communication made to the correspondents we can check their reports when published here.

No. 527

Extract from a Minute by Sir R. Vansittart

[C 7268/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 16, 1939

Secretary of State.

I had lunch with M. Maisky today. I will try to reduce a two-hour conversation to its simplest proportions.

He began by saying that we had now reached a position where the British Government had to make up its mind, and by making up its mind he indicated very clearly that he meant a full pact to include the Baltic States. I picked him up about the Baltic States and explained to him that they did not want to be included in a guarantee to include Russia. M. Maisky said his information was somewhat different. I replied that that was perhaps natural, but the fact remained. He retorted that the Roumanians had now given the Russians to understand that they would not really mind what sort of an agreement we concluded between France, England and Russia. I replied that whether that were completely accurate or not, it would on his own showing have taken the Roumanians a full month to get there, counting from the time when the conclusion of pacts originally began. To endeavour to bring in the Baltic States would on any showing take even longer even if it were successful, which at present seemed unlikely. I pointed out that M. Maisky himself had just said that speed was now the essence of the business and that he, Maisky, hoped that decision would not be deferred till Geneva, where the only result would be that he, Maisky, would again be seeing Lord Halifax, since M. Potemkin was not going to Geneva. The surest way to delay and complicate matters was to endeavour to bring in the Baltic States, anyhow at this stage. I said it might well be that in the event of Germany really attempting to attack Soviet Russia through the Baltic States the attitude of those States might change over-night. But we had to deal with things as they were now. Moreover, I did not think that a German attack on Soviet Russia via the Baltic States only was in the least likely. The front would be far too narrow for any effective result. No German attack on Soviet Russia was conceivable except by the broader front of Poland and Roumania, and it was on that that we had better concentrate now.

M. Maisky was somewhat impressed by these arguments, and on further pressure he said that it was possible that a conclusion might be reached which would leave out the question of the Baltic States but which must in any case include military conversations to decide how assistance would in fact be given on the more restricted but more practical basis of attacks via Poland and Roumania. Having in mind what was already contemplated in our draft telegram to Moscow, I said that this seemed to me to be taking a more

practical view of the problem and that I would turn over in my mind the stage reached by our conversation at the point at which we left it. . . .¹

¹ The remainder of this minute contained suggestions for a reply to the Soviet Government, the final text of which is printed below as No. 624. After hearing an account of this conversation, Lord Halifax suggested to his Cabinet colleagues on May 16 that Sir R. Vansittart should see M. Maisky again and explain that he had been thinking over their previous talk. He might ask M. Maisky whether he thought that a settlement might be possible on the lines (a) that His Majesty's Government objected to including the four Baltic States within the scope of the proposed arrangements, but that (b) they undertook to hold Staff conversations. If M. Maisky objected that the U.S.S.R. preferred a simpler form of direct guarantee from this country, Sir R. Vansittart might answer by a reference to the Polish and Roumanian objections to this course, and say that the negotiation of a settlement on these lines would clearly take considerable time; and that from the general political point of view it was desirable to reach an agreement as rapidly as possible. He might also use the argument that the U.S.S.R. would be well advised to be satisfied with His Majesty's Government's proposal for mutual support and assistance if war should result from the declarations made by the United Kingdom, France and the U.S.S.R.

On the following day a formula was drawn up for Sir R. Vansittart's use in his further talk with M. Maisky. This draft read as follows:

'Whereas the Governments of the United Kingdom and France have, by the declarations made by them on . . . [March 31 and April 13] undertaken obligations in regard to certain Eastern European countries. And whereas the Government of the U.S.S.R. have, on (date of declaration which, it is proposed, the U.S.S.R. should make about Poland and Roumania) declared that . . .

'The undersigned, duly authorized to that effect, hereby agree as follows:

'(1) Since any action taken by the Government of the U.S.S.R. in accordance with the above-mentioned declaration could only be taken under conditions which had already involved the Governments of the United Kingdom and France in taking corresponding action under the declarations made by them, it results that the three Governments will in these circumstances be engaged in the common task of resisting the act of aggression which had brought the said declarations into operation. Being thus engaged in hostilities in fulfilment of the above-mentioned declarations, the three Governments will give each other all the mutual support and assistance in their power.

'(2) The three Governments will concert together as to the methods by which such mutual support and assistance could, in case of need, be made most effective.

'(3) The three Governments are willing to consider in consultation the desirability of their making similar declarations in regard to other European countries. Should any such declarations be made by the three Governments as a result of such consultations, the provisions of paragraphs (1) and (2) above will apply, and in the event of an act of aggression which brought the said declarations into operation, the three Governments, being thus engaged in hostilities in fulfilment of the said declarations, will give each other all the mutual support and assistance in their power.'

For Sir R. Vansittart's interview with M. Maisky on May 17, see No. 589, note 1.

No. 528

Minute by Mr. Strang

[C 7206/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 16, 1939

M. Cambon of the French Embassy, who came today to obtain for M. Corbin the latest information about the state of our negotiations with the Soviet Government, put the following points to me:

(1) M. Bonnet had sent instructions to the French Chargé d'Affaires at Moscow impressing upon him the importance of not giving the impression that there was any difference of opinion between His Majesty's Government and the French Government as regards the negotiations with the Soviet Government. The fact that the formula which His Majesty's Government had recently put to the Soviet Government was not the same as the formula which the French Government had themselves proposed was not to be regarded as evidence of any differences of opinion. The French Government would be perfectly well satisfied with the British formula if the Soviet Government could be persuaded to accept it. He was therefore, for the present, to take a back seat and let Sir W. Seeds make the running.

(2) In these circumstances, M. Cambon thought it important that we should inform the French Government of the terms of our reply to the latest Soviet communication before it was actually handed to the Soviet Government so that the necessary instructions could again be sent to the French Chargé d'Affaires in Moscow.

(3) M. Corbin had received instructions to represent to His Majesty's Government that the French Government were naturally keenly interested in the course of the Anglo-Soviet negotiations. They were most anxious that there should not be undue delay and that the negotiations should not break down. In the present state of Europe, it was important that neither of these things should happen. The French Government were, of course, unaware of what line His Majesty's Government were proposing to take in their next communication to Moscow, but M. Bonnet begged that they would examine once again the last formula which the French Government had produced, since M. Bonnet thought that this formula might still be of value, and intended, if he thought circumstances required, to bring it back into the negotiations.

I told M. Cambon that the question of our reply was at present under consideration by the Secretary of State and his colleagues. I thought it likely that we might be able to do something to meet the objections expressed by the Soviet Government, and that if M. Corbin had any message to deliver it would be as well that he should do so as soon as possible.

W. STRANG

No. 529

Sir P. Loraine (Rome) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 20)

No. 442 [C 7325/15/18]

ROME, May 16, 1939

My Lord,

I have the honour to inform you that the Belgian Ambassador called on the Counsellor of His Majesty's Embassy on the 15th May and stated that he had seen the Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs in the morning and was rather perturbed by the attitude taken up by Count Ciano, who had told him that for the first time for months he thought Europe was in danger of war.

Count Ciano added, however, that no doors had yet been slammed and he hoped peace would be maintained. He said that the aggressive encirclement policy of Great Britain and France was responsible.

2. Count Kerchove informed Sir Noel Charles that there was no doubt that Italy had received a nasty jolt as a result of the Anglo-Turkish Declaration. Count Ciano told Count Kerchove that he should read Signor Mussolini's speech at Turin¹ very carefully, and actually read out himself the part about the guarantees. Count Ciano said that Italy and Germany were indissolubly tied up together, and an attack against the one was an attack against the other. Italy, he said, did not desire war, but if there was to be war about Danzig, Italy would be by the side of Germany. Count Ciano said that he was sending instructions to the Italian Ambassador at Warsaw to inform the Polish Government that they need not count on any favours from Italy in the event of their not coming to agreement with Germany about the Corridor.

3. Count Kerchove expressed the view that the Axis Powers were now making full use of the encirclement plans of the great democracies in preparing a war-mentality in their respective countries. He fears that however excellent and successful Anglo-French diplomacy has been recently, its very excellence may frighten the Axis into making war before the odds against them become too great. From the point of view of Italy, Count Kerchove's opinion is certainly a sustainable one, though it is improbable that Italy will go to war if she can possibly help it. She can probably still be relied on to do her best to restrain Germany. Her position is not an enviable one. Dominated by her powerful partner on the one hand, she sees the initiative passing into the hands of Great Britain and France, and her own schemes in the Mediterranean being countered. It would be difficult to exaggerate the importance of the Anglo-Turkish Declaration so far as this country is concerned.

I have, &c.,

PERCY LORAINÉ

¹ In the course of this speech on May 14, Signor Mussolini said that the system of guarantees would break down as the 'system of pistols pointed at Germany and Italy' had done.

No. 530

Sir W. Seeds (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 20)

No. 148 [C 7328/3356/18]

MOSCOW, May 16, 1939

My Lord,

In confirmation of my telegram No. 93¹ I have the honour to report that I called on M. Molotov by appointment at 9.30 p.m. on the 14th instant. M. Potemkin was also present.

2. M. Molotov handed to me, in Russian and French, the text of the Soviet Government's reply to the proposals of His Majesty's Government of

¹ No. 520.

the 8th May. He explained that the Russian was the valid text, and I have the honour to enclose a translation herein.²

3. I perused it carefully, and in silence except that when I came to the paragraph about the Baltic States and Finland I uttered deprecatory noises and tapped the paper with my fingers.

4. Subsequently I begged my hearers to note that on the part of His Majesty's Government there had never been expressed during the conversations any intention of guaranteeing the Baltic States. M. Molotov interjected that those States had been mentioned on the Soviet side. I said: 'Yes, but only in a general way.' Here, I proceeded, was a very definite statement mentioning the different countries by name. M. Molotov explained that Lithuania was not named because she and the Soviet Union had no common frontier. I proceeded to say that none of those States wanted to be associated with a Soviet guarantee, most especially Finland, which had unpleasant historical memories. As a matter of fact we always associated Finland rather with the Scandinavian countries than with the small States on the other side of the water. Finland had taken part with Sweden and Norway in the recent consultation at Stockholm and it was most important that nothing should be done which might arouse Finnish susceptibilities or prevent her from maintaining with Scandinavia a complete neutrality. M. Molotov listened attentively and asked various questions. He did not, as in the case of Poland at my previous interview, pretend to information about Finland contrary and superior to our own, but only suggested that Finland might not object to a guarantee in which Great Britain and France were associated. I should state that I maintained that our information was certain but purely general, pointing out that incorrect press rumours as to my conversations with M. Litvinov had caused nervousness in the Finnish press.

5. When I had said that I would immediately transmit the Soviet reply to Your Lordship, M. Molotov said that the document could be summarised as a request for reciprocity. I answered that Your Lordship and I had done what we could to point to the practical reciprocity provided for under His Majesty's Government's proposal: and I suggested that a clearer laying down of reciprocity in connexion with the British and French guarantees to Poland and Roumania might meet the case. He answered that each point of the Soviet reply followed logically from the preceding one.

6. I reminded M. Molotov of a message I had sent him as regards the possibility of his travelling to Geneva, where the session of the League Council would give useful opportunities for clearing up the situation by personal talks with Your Lordship. He said that he did not think it would be possible for him to go in person: no decision had yet been taken as to the composition of the delegation, but in any case the Soviet Union would be properly represented. The interview then ended in a humorous discussion of the respective values of Ministers for Foreign Affairs and Ambassadors in diplomatic negotiations.

I have, &c.,

WILLIAM SEEDS

² Not printed.

Letter from the French Ambassador to Viscount Halifax
(Received May 17)
[C 7266/3356/18]

AMBASSADE DE FRANCE, A LONDRES, le 16 mai 1939

Mon cher Secrétaire d'État,

D'après les indications reçues par le Ministre des Affaires Étrangères de la République, le Gouvernement de l'U.R.S.S. a fait connaître à Londres que les dernières propositions britanniques ne pouvaient servir de base à l'organisation d'un front de résistance contre de nouvelles agressions en Europe. J'ai été chargé, à ce propos, d'attirer votre attention sur les appréhensions qu'éprouve mon Gouvernement à voir se prolonger, dans les circonstances actuelles, un malentendu entre la Grande-Bretagne et l'U.R.S.S. Il est à craindre, en effet, que le Gouvernement de cette dernière puissance sera tenté de porter sur notre action une appréciation négative si les propositions des puissances occidentales lui apparaissent comme fictives ou réticentes. Si Moscou en venait à une pareille conclusion, les conséquences pratiques pourraient en être sérieuses. Nous avons déjà vu que l'attitude de l'U.R.S.S. exercerait une incidence directe sur la coopération que nous attendons de la Turquie.

D'autre part, nous savons qu'on suit avec un extrême intérêt, à Berlin, les vicissitudes des pourparlers anglo-soviétiques, et la presse du Reich exploite avec un empressement significatif les incidents qui marquent ces négociations, trahissant ainsi la crainte qu'elle éprouve de les voir aboutir. Il n'est pas douteux qu'un accord destiné à assurer éventuellement à la France et à l'Angleterre la collaboration russe serait considéré à Berlin comme la clé de voûte de l'édifice franco-britannique de sécurité à l'Est. Si, au contraire, à la suite d'un échec des négociations actuelles, la Russie se désintéresse du reste de l'Europe, il ne manquerait pas de gens dans l'entourage immédiat du Führer pour lui conseiller une opération militaire contre la Pologne en lui représentant qu'une décision pourrait être obtenue avant même que les puissances occidentales aient pu se porter au secours de leur allié polonais.

Dans ces conditions, la France et la Grande-Bretagne ne sauraient négliger aucun effort pour assurer une conclusion aussi rapide que possible de la négociation russe.

Ainsi que vous ne l'ignorez pas, le Gouvernement français, en vue de faciliter l'accord anglo-russe, a été amené à rechercher des formules d'entente sur la base des propositions qui avaient été faites du côté français dès le début de cette entreprise diplomatique. Sir Eric Phipps a été mis au courant le 3 mai des ajustements qu'il avait paru possible d'apporter à cette formule pour répondre aux objections russes.

M. Georges Bonnet continue à penser qu'il y aurait des chances sérieuses de trouver un accommodement sur cette base et m'a prié d'insister auprès de vous pour que nos suggestions soient attentivement examinées, afin que le

Gouvernement britannique puisse apprécier s'il ne serait pas opportun de les utiliser dans les propositions nouvelles qu'il croira devoir faire à Moscou. Mon Gouvernement considère en effet que tout en répondant aux exigences essentielles de l'U.R.S.S., notre formule n'évoque nullement la conception d'une entente permanente, mais affecte strictement la forme d'un accord occasionnel ne visant que des éventualités concrètes et nettement limitées.

Veuillez, &c.,

CH. CORBIN

No. 532

Letter from Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Sir A. Cadogan

[C 7388/54/18]

BRITISH EMBASSY, WARSAW, May 16, 1939

I was interested to see Neville Henderson's letter of May 4¹ of which you very kindly sent me a copy.

I do not know of any evidence that the Polish Government or Beck were warned in advance of the German *coup* on Bohemia and Moravia, still less of any evidence that they hoped to get Slovakia out of it. I had always thought that circumstances had brought about the *coup* at a moment which was almost as much a surprise to the Germans as to anyone else; but if the Poles were warned in advance, they certainly did less than nothing to prepare their public opinion either for such a *coup* or for a closer union with Slovakia; nor from my conversations with Beck or his advisers can I conceive that he was forewarned. Beck's complaint has always been that he was not warned of the *coup* though it involved extensive military movements on Poland's frontiers; and although I am only too well aware of his evasive qualities, it is ridiculous to suggest that he revised the whole of Polish policy out of pique. The real reason seems sufficiently clear to any but a wilfully blind man such as Attolico appears to be.

As regards Danzig, I am afraid there has never been any chance that the Poles would give it up. Before the German seizure of Bohemia and Moravia, Beck would perhaps personally have been inclined to do a deal on terms more favourable to the Germans than at present; but the Polish General Staff (and you must remember that the Marshal is a far bigger figure in Poland than Beck) have always been against any weakening of the position there from a military point of view (they have always opposed a German 'autobahn' across the Corridor for that reason) and I do not think that the possession of Slovakia, useful as it would be both *qua* prestige and in avoiding encirclement by Germany, would ever have sufficed to alter their attitude. Slovakia is on the other side of the Carpathians which form a very good strategic frontier. But Danzig and the Corridor are the lungs of Poland, and I have reported more than once during the last year that public opinion here was not prepared to make big concessions in that area.

H. W. KENNARD

¹ No. 366.

Letter from Sir W. Seeds (Moscow) to Sir L. Oliphant

[C 7614/3356/18]

BRITISH EMBASSY, MOSCOW, May 16, 1939

I am very sad at Litvinov's disappearance. Talks with him were always stimulating, thanks to his knowledge of men and matters and to his efficient technique, the whole salted at times by a bracing bluntness (shall we say?) and lit up by a steely eye. We had got to understand each other very well, whereas Molotov is still an enigma and I shall have to walk warily.

Take for instance the 'Poland' plank of our platform which he tried to smash up at my interview on the 8th.¹ He had spoken the previous day to my Polish colleague. . . .² When therefore Molotov was so confident that the Polish Government had changed their attitude, I wondered whether (a) he was putting up a bluff, or (b) he had really received assurances, or (c) he had been misled by the Polish Ambassador's politeness. The last seemed to me the most likely explanation as Molotov was obviously unacquainted with diplomatic technique. But I didn't know him well enough to do what I would have done with Litvinov—asked him whence he drew his information. If Litvinov had answered 'Beck' or 'Grzybowski', an expressive cocking of my eye would have led to a grin on his part and a common (perhaps even bluntly expressed) understanding that Poles are . . . Poles, where reliability is concerned. But Molotov spoke with Kremlin-like assurance. However I think he has by now realised that Poland is not quite as anxious publicly to chum up with Soviet Russia as he imagined: he certainly did not pretend to contrary and superior information when I spoke to him about Finland yesterday.³

It was curious that Molotov never mentioned the Baltic States in that first interview. When he asked what guarantees we had given to Holland and Belgium, I made certain he was going to work up to the question of Russia's need for protecting *her* Low Countries, so I shied off like a startled fawn. But nothing further developed out of his enquiry.

By the way, we talked through an interpreter at my first interview and with the assistance of Potemkin in that capacity at my second. Safety first, for both parties. But it gave me rather an advantage over Molotov in that I could understand the gist of a question while it was being asked, and had time to think of an answer while it was being translated.

For the moment my impression is that Litvinov's disappearance means chiefly the loss of an admirable technician or perhaps shock-absorber, and that we are faced with a more truly Bolshevik—as opposed to diplomatic or cosmopolitan—*modus operandi*. Reactions to what we say or do not say will be more violent and the great men in the Kremlin will be more apt to plunge off into the deep if disappointed or indignant: I am sure that Litvinov could

¹ See No. 421.² A personal reference is here omitted.³ See Nos. 520 and 530.

be trusted to keep our rather crazy craft away from the worst rocks so far as it was possible to do so.

I must confess to not being at all sure what these people are actually up to. The recent article in the 'Izvestiya'⁴ (which is being reproduced in all the provincial papers), their latest reply to our proposal,⁵ &c., might show that they mean to go on 'raising' us higher than we can possibly go with a view to an eventual outburst of true Communist indignation at our ineffectiveness and hypocrisy, ending in Soviet isolation and safety behind our guarantees to Poland. But that lamentable affair of the French reply in Bonnet's 'heat of the moment'⁶ has cut across our own negotiations and made it quite impossible to reach any conclusion in the above sense, for it is obvious that, when faced by two divergent proposals, only the fool (which the Russian is not) will not go all out for the more advantageous. So, for the moment, I see no option but to continue to take them at their word and to believe that they are not manœuvring to let us down with a sudden bump.

Even in a private letter it is better for me not to say what I think about that business of the French reply. Except this, that I hope in future cases to be better informed at the time whether I am faced by a gross and deliberate error of tactics or merely by the foolish amateurishness of a politician. I was vouchsafed no indication of what had happened or what had been intended, beyond one Intel telegram stating that Bonnet had 'further supplied the Soviet Ambassador with text of a French proposal'. The French Chargé d'Affaires was in no better case than myself: the handing in of two divergent replies seemed so foolish, and the lack of any more direct information, as to how the London-Paris exchange of views had produced such a result, seemed so inexplicable, that we came to the conclusion the Intel telegram referred in some mysterious way only to a draft French reply. Molotov disillusioned me on that score most effectually, but it was not until I received the telegram sections by bag yesterday that I knew what had really happened.

WILLIAM SEEDS

⁴ See No. 481.

See No. 520.

⁶ See No. 351.

No. 534

Viscount Halifax to Mr. Gallienne (Tallinn)

No. 1 Telegraphic [C 7209/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 17, 1939, 5.45 p.m.

The Estonian Chargé d'Affaires was informed yesterday, in reply to an enquiry;

(1) that the Soviet Government maintained their view that the arrangement which they thought ought to be reached should include, as part of it, a three-Power guarantee of certain States of Central and Eastern Europe, including Estonia;

(2) that it had not hitherto been our intention to enter into any such three-

Power guarantee and that it was unlikely that there would be any change in our attitude;

(3) that while in the past the Soviet Government had used a general expression to describe the countries in respect of which they wished the three-Power guarantee to be given we now understood that they included Finland within this definition, as well as Latvia and Estonia.

Repeated to Riga, Helsingfors, Kovno and Moscow.

No. 535

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax

(Received May 18, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 233 Telegraphic [C 7252/3356/18]

ANGORA, May 17, 1939, 8.7 p.m.

Your telegram No. 185.¹

Minister for Foreign Affairs seems to be fully informed from Moscow.

2. He gave me on May 17 details of a telegram he had received from Turkish Ambassador, Moscow. He is giving the same information to Turkish Embassy, London.

3. Turkish Ambassador, Moscow, explains attitude of Soviet Government as follows:

(a) As regards advent to Russia through the Baltic States he points out that Germany could not attack Russia by this route without Poland's acquiescence. Soviet request for guarantees as regards attack through Baltic States is therefore somewhat in the nature of window dressing.

(b) Soviet Government nevertheless entertain a fear, which they do not like to put into words, of possible German attack on Russia with Polish co-operation. It is against this that they wish to be safeguarded.

(c) In general they desire complete reciprocity of guarantee and they are animated by considerable distrust especially where Poland is concerned, though they hesitate to admit it.

4. Turkish Ambassador, Moscow, makes personal suggestion that situation might be met by some form of general declaration by His Majesty's Government, French, Soviet and Turkish Governments that they would act together 'in case of aggression'. Minister for Foreign Affairs says that he has not yet put this suggestion before his colleagues and cannot say what their view would be.

5. Minister for Foreign Affairs feels convinced that Soviet Government desire to co-operate with us if only their suspicions and the difficulties explained above can be repelled [*sic* ? dispelled]. Except as regards paragraph 4 above, he adopted attitude in speaking to me, of speaking indirectly on behalf of Soviet Government.

Repeated to Moscow.

¹ No. 521.

No. 536

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax
(Received May 18, 11.0 a.m.)

No. 234 Telegraphic [E 3637/9/44]

ANGORA, May 17, 1939, 8.30 p.m.

My telegram No. 229.¹

Minister for Foreign Affairs told me on May 17 that the German Ambassador had been to see him before leaving.

2. Herr von Papen's main line of approach to recent developments had been to urge the Turkish Government not to commit themselves to a definite agreement with His Majesty's Government and if they must do so to ensure that any such agreement contained a definition of the term 'aggressor'. Herr von Papen argued that it was His Majesty's Government who were definitely preparing to provoke war.

3. Herr von Papen had at first been appealing and had then become threatening. He had asked if the Turkish Government realised their position if Germany ceased to purchase Turkish goods. The Minister for Foreign Affairs had replied that Germany did not deal fairly with Turkey over commercial matters and charged Turkey exorbitant prices. Germany would never find so satisfactory an alternative market.

4. On the political side Germany had made friends with Turkey's ancient enemy and, just as in 1911, was preparing to encourage Italy to attack Turkey.

5. The immediate impression is that the German Ambassador has accepted the Anglo-Turkish understanding and that the German reaction will not be very serious though they may try to impede conclusion of final agreement.

6. He told me that the German Ambassador had been anxious for the Turks to send Numan² to Berlin for final negotiations on commercial agreement. Turkish Government have however decided to send only a commercial expert with strict instructions to avoid all political discussions.

Repeated to Berlin.

¹ Not printed. This telegram of May 15 reported that Herr von Papen was going to Berlin on May 15 to report on the situation.

² M. Menemencioglu, Secretary-General at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

No. 537

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora)

No. 188 Telegraphic [E 3547/143/44]

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 17, 1939, 10.5 p.m.

Your telegram No. 222.¹

I am grateful for your review of the position.

2. As regards Stage 2, I entirely share the desire of the Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs to proceed as rapidly as possible. This stage contemplates

¹ No. 512.

covering a large number of questions, but in practice what must be cleared up in the first instance is the question how our two Governments propose to co-operate in order to defend the independence of Greece and Roumania if attacked. Agreement on this all important point will constitute an essential step in achieving—to quote clause 6 of the Anglo-Turkish Declaration—‘the establishment of security in the Balkans’. The Turkish Government are aware of the nature of the guarantee which His Majesty’s Government have given to Roumania and Greece, but I am not clear as to what obligations the Turkish Government for their part have undertaken *vis-à-vis* these two countries. We feel that our close relations with the Turkish Government and the commitments which we have now assumed towards one another entitle us to ask for full information on this subject.

3. The Roumanian Minister for Foreign Affairs when he was here gave an account of his talks at Angora at Easter and of the signed *procès-verbal* which had resulted therefrom. You will have seen from the record which was sent to you under cover of Mr. Strang’s letter of April 26² that Turkey has undertaken certain commitments as regards Roumania which go rather beyond her obligations under the Balkan Pact. It is difficult for me to assess the precise nature of these commitments but in any case they seem to fall short of those that His Majesty’s Government have for their part undertaken as regards Roumania. For your own information we also believe that a closer understanding exists between Turkey and Greece than is revealed in the Turco-Greek Treaty of April 1938.

4. In the case of Greece we assume that the obligations which Turkey has now undertaken in the Anglo-Turkish declaration would in any event involve Turkey in war should Greece be attacked, since this would lead to war in the Mediterranean area. The case of Roumania is different, but here again His Majesty’s Government attach the greatest importance to the co-operation of Turkey in the event of Great Britain having to implement her guarantee to Roumania. Indeed, one of our original objects in entering into the present negotiations with the Turkish Government was to put us in as good a position as possible to implement our guarantee to Roumania, inasmuch as, owing to the Montreux Convention, it is only when Turkey is a belligerent that His Majesty’s Government can send armed assistance to Roumania by sea.

5. It is essential therefore that the undertakings which the Turkish Government have already assumed or may now assume *vis-à-vis* Greece and Roumania should be in complete harmony with the undertakings which His Majesty’s Government have undertaken towards these two countries or should not at least be such as would make our obligations more difficult of fulfilment.

6. I shall be glad if you will approach the Turkish Government in the sense of this telegram. One of your arguments will no doubt be that, as Turkish Government will fully appreciate, a complete knowledge of the position occupied by both Governments *vis-à-vis* Roumania and Greece is a

² Not printed. This letter enclosed the record of the conversations held during M. Gafencu’s visit to London. See Nos. 278, 279, 285 and 295.

sine qua non for the success of the Staff talks which we hope will now shortly be initiated.

7. If it emerges from your enquiries that the Turkish obligations *vis-à-vis* Roumania and Greece are of such a nature as to make complete harmony with our own difficult to attain, I foresee that it will be necessary for us to induce the Turkish Government to adapt them to the new circumstances created by the declaration of mutual assistance which our two Governments have just made.

8. I shall address to you shortly separate telegrams on the questions coming under the head of Stage 3.

No. 538

Mr. Shepherd (Danzig) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 20)

No. 8 Saving: Telegraphic [C 7410/54/18]

DANZIG, May 17, 1939

Since I sent you my telegram No. 41¹ I have personally investigated as far as feasible the situation here and discussed it with my more conservative and reliable consular colleagues as well as with the Polish Commissary-General.

2. It is generally agreed that there has been a substantial increase in numerical strength of potential military forces of Danzig as well as in supply of arms and ammunition for those forces.

3. The former extensive Hussar barracks which have hitherto been more than adequate to accommodate Danzig military police, are not only obviously much fuller than they were but one of the largest blocks, which until recently appeared to be relatively unused, is now entirely occupied by beds in two tiers with apparently brand new bedding, &c.

4. On May 14 my United States colleague observed a procession of about fifteen grey-painted motor vehicles with East Prussian licence numbers proceeding in the direction of the police barracks. When I mentioned this to Polish Deputy Commissioner-General, he informed me that on the night of May 13 after Custom-house on East Prussian frontier was closed, twenty covered lorries entered the Free City and proceeded in the direction of Danzig. One of the Polish Customs officials, assigned as an observer (but with no right to stop or search) to Danzig Custom-House in question, followed these lorries on a motor-cycle until they were met by members of the Danzig police, who prevented the observer from following any further on the ground that the road and surrounding country were temporarily closed to the public for police exercises. Representations made by Commissary to Danzig authorities regarding this incident elicited the reply that, although entry was made when Custom-House now [*sic* ? was] closed, it had been notified in advance and everything was in order. The Pole expressed the belief that these lorries contained arms and ammunition.

5. The Pole and I have learned independently that top floor of Municipal

¹ No. 523.

High School in Weidengasse has been closed since the end of March and is full of cases which are reputed to contain munitions. Polish authorities here incline to discount this rumour because of the proximity to the school of former cavalry barracks, which are now used as a police station and which would seem to be the more logical depot.

6. My German colleague informed my United States colleague on May 15 that on the German side of the Corridor, apparently between Stolp and Gross Boschpol, Germany has mobilised heavy artillery capable of inflicting serious damage on Gdynia and Hura should the Poles attack Danzig.

7. Although the Poles, with characteristic optimism, express confidence in their ability to cope with any situation that might arise in this connexion, since there at present seems no likelihood of Danzig problem being solved by negotiation whilst determination is announced by Poles to retain and by Germans to regain Danzig, I feel that the possibility should not be overlooked that, when the time is deemed opportune, the Danzig authorities may, under instructions from Berlin, announce determination of the Free City to return to Germany and to entrust its destiny to the Führer. At the same time the military forces would occupy strategical positions about the city and be supported by a German fleet while the Poles would be warned that, if they took any steps to prevent Danzig from carrying out its determination to return to Germany, counter-measures would be taken against Gdynia and Polish navy in the belief that Poland would acquiesce without fighting if they were faced with a *fait accompli* and accompanying threat to their vital interests.

Repeated to Berlin and Warsaw.

No. 539

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)

No. 1216 [C 7205/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 17, 1939*

Sir,

The French Ambassador asked to see me today to enquire whether I was in a position to tell him anything further concerning our negotiations with the Soviet Government. The Ambassador, on behalf of the French Government, had written me a letter¹ yesterday which conveyed the concern of the French Government at the difficulties that were being encountered by these negotiations and their anxiety lest deadlock should result. This they thought would be dangerous from its possible effect in Berlin and from the reactions that it might induce in the German Government as regards Danzig. The French Government had accordingly wished him to convey their hope that we should not overlook the possibility of turning to practical use the suggested drafts that the French Government had submitted some short time ago.

2. I told M. Corbin that I was in full agreement with the French Government as to the importance of the negotiations on which we were now engaged, and also as to the dangers of deadlock or failure. The Soviet Government had,

¹ No. 531.

in my opinion, been the reverse of helpful, and I hoped he would forgive me for saying that I thought their attitude might in part have been influenced by M. Bonnet's action, of which he himself had told us and which, perhaps, he himself had felt somewhat disposed to regret, in giving the Soviet Ambassador the alternative draft prepared by the French Government, that went very much further than our own.²

3. It had so happened, however, that Sir R. Vansittart had had the opportunity yesterday of a long private talk with M. Maisky,³ as a result of which I was not unhopeful of progress being found possible on the general lines on which we had been working. The principal grounds on which I felt our proposals might be defended were those of urgency and what we knew to be the feelings of the Baltic States. A joint triple pact such as proposed by the Soviet Government must inevitably involve considerable delay, and we knew that the Baltic States themselves did not favour any such procedure. I was, therefore, not without hope that on these grounds the Soviet Government would perhaps be willing not to insist on their wide proposal, provided that we could make it plain to them that we were fully prepared to give mutual assistance and support within the range covered by our own plan, and should further be willing—and this was going a good deal further than we had ever gone before—to have conversations as to how to make this mutual assistance effective in case of necessity. It might also be possible to say something in the sense of not closing any door to an extension of the undertakings that we and the Soviet Government might mutually accept to one another in the future. I told the Ambassador that I should hope to be in a position to give him fuller information in the course of a day or two, and meanwhile he could assure M. Bonnet that we had no intention of allowing our efforts with the Soviet Government either to reach deadlock or to fail if we could help it, and that, if things seemed to be moving in either of these directions, we should certainly not fail to see whether any way out might be furnished by the French proposals. We had these very much in mind, but I still hoped that we could reach our end more expeditiously by way of our own plan.

4. M. Corbin then told me that he understood that the French Government had received the proposals of the Turkish Government concerning Hatay, and he believed that these were likely to prove acceptable. There might be a few modifications, but he did not seem to expect that these would cause difficulty.

5. As regards Italy, so far as he knew there was no change in the position, and he gathered that it had not been at all appreciated in Italy that Signor Mussolini's speech at Turin⁴ should have been so plainly interpreted in France as meaning that the Italian Government do not in any circumstances desire war. I told M. Corbin that I feared one of the difficulties that from time to time occurred was that the French press were so outspoken in the drawing of morals from Signor Mussolini's speeches. M. Corbin readily

² See No. 351.

³ See No. 527.

⁴ See No. 529, note 1.

acknowledged the soft impeachment, but said that it was very difficult to prevent it.

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

No. 540

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 20)

No. 132 [C 7326/54/18]

WARSAW, May 17, 1939

My Lord,

I have the honour to transmit herewith a minute by the Military Attaché which explains how the strategic position of Poland would be compromised by the return of Danzig to the Reich and the remilitarisation of the Free State territory. It is perhaps not always appreciated that this territory is some 50 kilom. wide and 40 kilom. deep from north to south, and that its remilitarisation would involve German troops approaching to within 40 kilom. of each other on either side of the Corridor, whereas at present they are separated by 90 kilom. of Polish and Free State territory.

2. There are, however, many considerations, apart from military ones, which to the Polish mind render a one-sided or dictated settlement of the Danzig question a clear threat to their independence. While I do not propose in this despatch to deal with them exhaustively, I will take the opportunity to present some of the more cogent reasons for Poland's present attitude.

3. It was, I believe, Frederick the Great who remarked that the master of Danzig was the master of Poland. Certainly the Poles feel that the demilitarised Free State, owing to its key position on Poland's rail and river communications with the sea, is an essential element in and symbol of her independence. From the economic point of view the position has not been radically altered by the creation of the port of Gdynia. For 78 per cent. of Polish foreign trade passes through Danzig and Gdynia, in roughly equal proportions, and neither Gdynia nor the railway serving it is capable of handling the whole of this traffic.

4. Further, the question of Danzig is inseparable from that of the so-called Corridor, i.e., the Polish Province of Pomorze. The rather obscure story of Polish-German discussions in the last few months brings out this all-important fact, for German proposals regarding Danzig have always been coupled with others, whether they are regarded as reasonable or not, affecting the Corridor.

5. If we turn to Herr Hitler's actual proposals for a settlement it is necessary to ask why they not only appeared unacceptable to the Polish Government, but provoked the partial mobilisation of Polish forces. It is not impossible that Herr Hitler really believed that his proposals were reasonable, but, as M. Beck emphasised in his speech on the 5th May, they could only be interpreted in the light of the *real intentions* behind them. One must add that those intentions could best be gauged by Nazi policy in regard to other problems which Germany had 'solved' during the last year.

6. Herr Hitler's intention presumably was that relations between Germany and Poland should continue to be such as they had been during the first Czecho-Slovak crisis, i.e., that Poland should be neutralised in regard to further German plans, from which indeed Poland herself might expect to benefit so long as she accepted what the Greater Germany chose to confer. But the subsequent dismemberment and occupation of Czecho-Slovakia, in spite of all the concessions she had been forced to make, had a profound effect not only on public opinion here, but even on those members of the Polish Foreign Ministry who, until March 1939, seemed to believe that Poland's prosperity could best be secured by friendship with Germany even at the cost of alienating Great Britain and France. To quote M. Beck's word again, it was Herr Hitler's *methods* in dealing with Czecho-Slovakia, Lithuania and Roumania that brought the Polish Government to a realisation of what was happening in Europe. Indeed, if the German Government had tackled the Danzig and Corridor problem before that of Czecho-Slovakia it is possible that the Polish Government might, in reliance on German good faith, have come to a settlement, and subsequently found themselves in that position of compulsory subservience to Germany which, with the lesson of Czecho-Slovakia before their eyes, they are now determined at all costs to avoid.

7. It is, however, idle to speculate whether M. Beck, in his desire to regulate relations with Germany, would actually have been able to induce the Government and people of Poland to agree to something approaching Herr Hitler's terms. Although an 'autobahn' across the Corridor might have been possible, remilitarisation of the Free State territory would, as shown by the Military Attaché, always have been regarded by the Polish General Staff as a grave threat to Poland's independence.

8. In any case, by March 1939 everyone in Poland realised that Poland was now expected to sign on the dotted line or take the consequences, and against such a solution the Polish character rebelled.

9. I have already dealt telegraphically with the possibility of interim steps or stages short of German military occupation of the Free State territory which might be attempted by the Nazi party. The most plausible and apparently the least risky would be the mere declaration by the Senate of Danzig that they wished to be united with the Reich. As regards Poland's reaction in this event, M. Beck's answer to Your Lordship's question as recorded in my telegram No. 151¹ may seem at first sight to be inadequate. This inadequacy is, however, I venture to think, due not to any lack of frankness, but to the real difficulty of foreseeing the precise circumstances and immediate sequels of such a declaration. Your Lordship will recall that in my telegram No. 94² of the 30th March, before the Prime Minister's declaration was made, I drew attention to the possibility of Polish troops occupying Danzig in the event of such a resolution by the Senate. Your Lordship, in reply,³ remarked that the German technique of aggression was so varied and

¹ No. 459.

² See Volume IV of this Series, No. 573.

³ Ibid., No. 584.

so insidious that in certain circumstances Poland might in self-defence be driven to commit a technical act of aggression.

10. Since M. Beck's visit to London and the mutual guarantees exchanged between our two countries and in view of my subsequent talks with M. Beck, I feel that there is not much danger of the Polish Government replying to a mere declaration by the Senate in a manner disproportionate to the provocation. At the same time the Polish Government hold that the Senate would not make any move except on instructions from Berlin, and that any move would imply that Herr Hitler was prepared to follow it up by further steps unless the Polish Government tamely submitted. I do not think it would be an illogical deduction from such a move that the German Government had decided that the moment had come to attempt to humiliate Poland, break the Anglo-Polish understanding, and thereby bring about the collapse of the whole anti-aggression front.

11. Your Lordship has tentatively suggested that a suitable reply on the part of the Polish Government would be an economic boycott of Danzig. Such action would seem to have the merit of not at once plunging the two countries into hostilities, but a boycott is, of course, a double-edged weapon, and would severely injure Polish interests. Further, I am bound to confess that to my mind it would almost inevitably be followed by German counter-measures or counter-demands entailing so great a deterioration in Polish-German relations that actual hostilities would not be long deferred. I have, however, in accordance with Your Lordship's instructions, made the suggestion to M. Beck, as evidence of His Majesty's Government's desire that in the event of a move by the Danzig Senate the Polish Government should not at once take some irrevocable step without giving time for consultation between our two Governments.

12. I need not say that I have anxiously considered whether there is any constructive suggestion that I could make towards finding a way out of the present impasse. The existing situation is from every point of view unpleasant and dangerous. Partial mobilisation is putting a great strain on Polish finances and yet no one could recommend any relaxation of the vigilant and determined attitude which this state of preparedness typifies. In the second place, although it is a platitude to say that between the Axis Powers and the anti-aggression front the present state of affairs is a battle of nerves, and although Polish nerves are equal to those of any nation in Europe, one cannot contemplate with equanimity the indefinite continuance of this tension. The situation is that of 'uneasy peace' foreshadowed in my telegram No. 66⁴ of the 21st March.

13. Mediation by the democratic Powers would presumably be unacceptable to the Reich and probably unwelcome to the Polish Government. The initiative of His Holiness the Pope for a Five-Power Conference⁵ has for many good reasons fallen into the background. Any direct initiative by Poland seems to be ruled out by the probability that it would be taken by the

⁴ Ibid., No. 465.

⁵ See No. 362.

German Government as a sign of weakness; and although there must be many Poles who in a private capacity might have acted as go-betweens, I do not think that this course has much to recommend it. There is, indeed, a chance that Poland might regard Signor Mussolini as a suitable medium, not for the purposes of arbitration but to bring about the resumption of unofficial talks. In view, however, of the fact that Herr Hitler has publicly stated his terms, and that only a very liberal interpretation of his *desiderata* would enable them to be represented as reasonable in the eyes of Polish public opinion, I cannot but feel that, at any rate for months to come, no radical solution of the Danzig and Corridor problems is possible.

14. In this uncertain situation there is one important fact which deserves to be emphasised as strongly as possible, both in public and in private. It is that the Versailles solution of the Danzig problem was a compromise which took due account of those principles of 'Lebensraum' and self-determination which have become the raw material of Nazi propaganda. Poland herself has always regarded it as unfair and unsatisfactory. The Nazification of Danzig and the impotence of the High Commissioner of the League of Nations have subsequently altered the balance to Poland's detriment, albeit with her tacit consent. In the Free State territory the Nazi party are the oppressors and not the oppressed. While it is true that about three-quarters of a million Germans live in the Western Polish provinces, in no province do they amount to more than 10 per cent. of the population, and there are probably about as many Poles in Germany, although German methods of census-taking are designed to obscure this. The fact that ethnographically East Prussia is separated from the rest of the Reich by a Polish province is no doubt unfortunate for Germany. It is equally unfortunate for Poland that this Polish province is wedged so uncomfortably between Pomerania and East Prussia. Perhaps even more 'unfair' is it that the sea to which this Corridor leads should be liable in time of war to become a German lake. These, however, are the brutal facts, historical and geographical, which Hitler and Pilsudski faced in 1934. To the German assertion that times have changed, the Polish riposte would doubtless be (1) that they have not changed so much as all that, and (2) that the particular kind of change exemplified by Herr Hitler's entry into Prague shall not be repeated at the mouth of the Vistula.

15. I therefore am forced to the conclusion that our policy should have the limited objective of restoring the position to what it was before Herr Hitler made his speech on the 28th April, namely, a mutual understanding between Poland and Germany, firstly that this problem is not one which need or should bring about a war, and secondly that the *status quo* is to be preserved for a period of time, pending the possibility of amicable negotiations, as was laid down in the Polish-German Agreement of 1934.

16. I am sending copies of this despatch to His Majesty's Representatives in Berlin and Danzig.

I have, &c.,
H. W. KENNARD

Lieutenant-Colonel Sword to Sir H. Kennard

WARSAW, May 9, 1939

H.E. The Ambassador

In view of opinions expressed in certain quarters that the surrender of Danzig to Germany would not appreciably affect the strategic position of Poland, it might be useful briefly to enumerate certain military factors which have not found much emphasis in reactions to the recent *exposés* of Herr Hitler and M. Beck.

2. The undulating and wooded nature of the country in the northern zone of the Corridor does offer some measure of defensive capacity, while the Polish naval base at Hel is sufficiently isolated from the mainland as to afford it at least some degree of protection.

3. The western boundary of the Danzig Free State territory, which reaches to within 5 kilom. of Gdynia, and the ground on the western portion of the Free State afford artillery positions and observation, by means of which it would be an easy task to shell Gdynia. The occupation of Danzig by German troops would enable them without difficulty to build bridges across the Vistula (whereas at present only one road bridge exists at Tczew), thus facilitating German invasion at will of Polish Pomerania, and rendering still more difficult the defence of the Corridor.

4. While Poland's position in the Baltic in existing circumstances is admittedly one of extreme strategic difficulty, the German occupation of Danzig would still further facilitate the laying of mines with a view to restricting the traffic of Polish ships.

5. Polish railway communication with Gdynia at present depends on the so-called 'coal line' from Herby, which still remains mainly a single track, and the Polish-owned double railway passing through Danzig territory. The single-line railway is insufficient for the needs of Gdynia, and in spite of Herr Hitler's promises to respect Polish rights, in view of recent experiences in Memelland and elsewhere, it can hardly be supposed that Poland would be allowed to retain full ownership of the double railway. Much the same applies to the present considerable Polish ownership of property and harbour rights in the Free City.

6. In the above paragraphs I have omitted reference to the many conflicting political and historical arguments brought forward by Germany and Poland regarding their respective rights in Danzig, as these lie beyond the scope of this paper. The fact remains, however, that these arguments do not appear to justify in themselves any such drastic alteration in the Constitution of the Free City as is advocated by Germany.

7. It has often been said in the past that Gdynia and Polish Pomerania are indefensible. This may ultimately be true, but the considerations to which I have referred clearly show that the occupation of Danzig by Germany would have a very adverse effect on Poland's strategical position in this area and render still more difficult the question of defence. Poland could not

reasonably be expected to make such a sacrifice as would involve a surrender of her rights in Danzig without adequate compensation.

E. R. SWORD
Lt.-Colonel, Military Attache

No. 541

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 20)

No. 574 [C 7324/54/18]

BERLIN, May 17, 1939

My Lord,

The political horizon in this country since the end of March has been dominated by what is described here as the British policy of encirclement and by the spectre of Polish-German relations with all the grave dangers which are necessarily involved. Herr Hitler's speech in the Reichstag on the 28th April was primarily intended as a reply to President Roosevelt's peace appeal, but its real importance lay not so much in the cheap gibes at the expense of the President or in the denunciation of the Anglo-German Naval Agreement as in the bitterness of attitude displayed towards Poland and the abrogation of the German-Polish Agreement of 1934. The fact that what was regarded here as a generous offer of a twenty-five-year German guarantee of the existing Polish frontier in exchange for a satisfactory settlement of the Danzig and Corridor problem had been rejected out of hand by Poland has not only incensed Herr Hitler personally, but has made a deep impression on the country as a whole. However averse from war the general public may be, no more popular issue than that of Danzig and the Corridor could have been conjured up to rally even the most lukewarm and hesitant supporters of the present régime to the National Socialist banner for a war of liberation. The subsidiary question as to when and in what form exactly the German offer was made has hardly entered into the calculations of the man in the street. All he realises is that a generous offer was made and turned down and cannot be repeated. Further, the traditional German feeling of hatred for Poland, particularly in the army, and Polish ingratitude for Germany's past services only constitute one of many considerations which may make the German Government less anxious to refrain from forceful action, if necessary, at the opportune moment to set right what is regarded as a galling injustice of the Treaty of Versailles. Although the arguments in support of the Polish case may be extremely strong—and I fully realise their force—it is impossible to close one's eyes to the natural effect which the present Polish attitude must have on a mentality such as that of Herr Hitler in whose hands alone the fate of Germany lies and who never fails to pay off old scores when he considers the moment ripe.

2. Public resentment against Poland has not been allowed by the propaganda experts to die down. Every incident in which the German minority in Poland suffers ill-treatment is greatly magnified and given full prominence in the German press, whilst the fantastic claims of irresponsible Polish elements

for domination over East Prussia and other German territory affords cheap fuel to the flames. What is regarded as the blank cheque given by His Majesty's Government to Poland is generally held to be principally responsible for the outbreak of Polish chauvinism and megalomania and the rejection of any compromise solution. The press, although continuing each day in this strain and giving expression to veiled threats that Poland should think again before it is too late, has, however, probably on orders from higher authority, refrained up to the present from letting loose the full force of its venom against Colonel Beck and the Polish Government. The time has not yet come for that stage of propaganda machinery.

3. A period of comparative calm has now intervened, and this is particularly noticeable in journalistic circles. From many quarters the opinion is expressed that nothing untoward will happen for the next two months, but that Germany will in the end obtain satisfaction for her claims without resort to arms. But in spite of this apparent *détente* in the atmosphere, the danger always exists that a tactless move by irresponsible elements on either side of the frontier may at any moment degenerate into a conflict and thus involve the world in a general conflagration. It is difficult to explain with certainty the reasons for this relaxation of tension, but its existence cannot in any way be regarded as representing a change of heart on the part of Herr Hitler or as indicating a readiness at all costs to settle the Danzig and Corridor issues in the council chamber rather than by force of arms. If there be a pause it merely means that Herr Hitler considers any attempt to secure his objectives at the present moment by a frontal attack to be fraught with too much danger for Germany, and that consequently it behoves him for the moment to try Fabian tactics. These might, for instance, have the effect of lulling the democratic Powers into a false sense of security and of decreasing the general atmosphere of tension whilst, at the same time, placing such a strain on the Polish financial and military machine that Poland herself might feel it more prudent to come to terms. Further, in German eyes a period of calm might provide a better stage setting for a sudden German *coup* and the presentation of a *fait accompli* without the provocation of a world war. Herr Hitler is a past master of the art of profiting from the mistakes of his opponents and of turning and employing the circumstances of the moment to suit his purposes. If, therefore, this present lull has been artificially engineered in German interests, no time is being lost in the interval to bolster up the nerves of the German public and to bruit abroad the prestige and might of the Third Reich. The decision at Milan to conclude a German-Italian Military Pact and the publicity given to Herr Hitler's recent inspection of the western fortifications constitute typical examples of the kind of propaganda which the German Government are employing to prepare their own country for any emergency and to sow misgivings in the hearts of the so-called encirclement Powers, and particularly of Poland, as regards power of resistance to the German war machine.

4. Whilst I appreciate how dangerous it is to try to estimate the future course of action of a man so incalculable as Herr Hitler, yet I cannot help

feeling that, from the point of view of prestige in his own country, to say nothing of the economic pressure from within, he must, by hook or crook, obtain before September some settlement of the Danzig and Corridor question which gives him the substance at least of his claim. If that is so and success is not forthcoming in some other field, peace and war are this year in the balance and must remain so, until this problem is satisfactorily settled.

I have, &c.,

NEVILLE HENDERSON

No. 542

Letter from Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax

[C 7467/15/18]

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, May 17, 1939

Dear Secretary of State,

The weather forecast indicates a lull. Hitler told the French Ambassador at Nuremberg last year that weather prophets were always wrong.¹ Certainly, however, the more reliable indications point to a two months' pause, but I would feel more confident if it had not been for last March. So may it be again. I did not anticipate for a moment that Hitler would go the lengths which he did on that occasion just on the eve of the Stanley-Hudson visit which might have been so important economically for Germany and it would seem equally reasonable to think the same just before the visits of the Prince Regent of Yugoslavia and the King of Italy. Unfortunately Hitler is a law under [*sic* ? unto] himself and the supreme master of opportunism. If an incident occurs of which he sees profit is to be taken, he will again seize it.

Nevertheless, having hedged to that extent, I do not believe that he will seek to make an incident. What advantage he sees for himself and Germany in a pause I would not like to say. There are many possible reasons (e.g. Russia) but one may be quite sure that however sound they are for him, they bode no goodwill for Poland or ourselves. If he temporises because Germany is not ready for a big war or Italy won't agree to it, it will only be temporising. He will merely bide his time till the omens seem more favourable. He has no intention of leaving Danzig, with its population of some 400,000 Germans, out of Great Germany. Amid much uncertainty we can at least be certain of that.

Two months' pause, however, if we get it, should at least be useful to us both in the air and with our military service scheme. If the French would only get down to a settlement with Italy and particularly if they could do so before the King of Italy's visit to Berlin, if it does take place, the pause might be still more profitable. Allies are a terrible handicap. The secret of success, according to Napoleon, was that, while he was always on his own, his enemies were always a coalition. I have often felt great sympathy for Pitt.

According to my Italian colleague, the chief point of Mussolini's last speech at Turin was roughly 'This is the fourth time I have offered peace.

¹ See Volume II of this Series, Appendix I.

If Great Britain and France have proposals to make, let them now make them, since war itself is better than a prolongation of suspense.'

The role of an optimist is an ungrateful one nowadays, yet I still believe that if we could get the Danzig-Corridor and Italo-French questions out of the way, there might still be a faint prospect for the world to settle down for a few years anyway.

Can the Nazi movement settle down? Must it not keep going on or break? If so, is there any alternative to war? Those are the big questions which one asks oneself and asks again. War is such an appalling adventure that I have always felt, and still feel, that everything else must first be tried. My personal belief, long before I came to Berlin, had always been that Germany would never settle down until German unity was complete. The German people would continue to prefer guns to butter so long as Austria and the Sudeten, Memel and Danzig were not incorporated in or reunited to Germany. Thereafter the standard of success of the Nazi Régime would be the standard of living. The régime might wish to keep itself going on adventure but I hoped that the nation would then refuse to follow it, preferring definitely a higher standard of living to schemes of foreign conquest or expansion.

In spite of Prague, it is still my belief that the alternative to war is a settlement of the one outstanding problem, Danzig and the Corridor. Thereafter butter is better than guns might really become the insistent popular German cry and the Nazi extremist régime might not be able to resist it.

Yours ever,
NEVILLE HENDERSON

No. 543

Letter from Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Sir A. Cadogan

[C 7389/54/18]

BRITISH EMBASSY, WARSAW, May 17, 1939

We have endeavoured in our despatch No. 132,¹ which goes to you by bag today, to examine why any direct or indirect German action regarding Danzig, even if it be of a relatively mild description, might be considered here as a 'threat to Polish independence'. I hope that it is not felt that this Embassy in any way allow the Poles to feel that now that they have the British guarantee they can take any ill-advised or hasty action in this respect. I have repeatedly warned Beck of the danger of falling into a German trap to place Poland in a bad light in the eyes of the public opinion of the world, and also of the danger of giving any justification to the German campaign regarding ill-treatment of the German minority here.

2. I regret that I have not been able to secure from Beck a more satisfactory definition (see your telegram No. 151² and my telegram No. 151³ in reply) of what the Polish Government propose to do in certain eventualities as regards Danzig, but it is genuinely difficult for Beck to define clearly his

¹ No. 540.

² No. 442.

³ No. 459.

action before he is fully aware of the circumstances. As the great danger is a military one I feel that the Staff conversations which are now to take place might elucidate this problem more clearly.

3. I notice that letters are appearing in the 'Times' and elsewhere giving some support to the German case as regards Danzig, and I would suggest that it might be desirable to educate public opinion in England on the Danzig question and put the Polish case before them in a fairer light.

4. I am afraid that you will feel that the Poles have opened their mouths rather wide as regards financial assistance, but I earnestly hope that something can be done to give them some support, as there is little doubt that, in view of the fact that they may have to remain mobilised for a considerable period during this summer, the financial situation here must deteriorate, bringing with it the possibility of inflation. This additional and unexpected expenditure is particularly unfortunate as they had just begun to turn the corner towards financial and economic stability.

5. You may recall that in my telegram No. 66⁴ of March 21, when we suggested to the Poles a common declaration of resistance to aggression, I said that if the Poles were to come out into the open they would want to be sure that 'the other signatories are prepared and in a position to see them through not only eventual war but also the period of uneasy peace which might follow such a declaration'. Being Germany's direct neighbours, it is just this period of uneasy peace during which they need our material and moral support.

6. I do not want you to think that they are complaining or showing any signs of losing either their head or their nerve. The general atmosphere is quite calm and, as a despatch sent by this bag⁵ shows, the internal political situation is good.

H. W. KENNARD

⁴ See Volume IV of this Series, No. 465.

⁵ Not printed.

No. 544

Sir R. Campbell (Belgrade) to Viscount Halifax

(Received May 18, 3.10 p.m.)

No. 114 Telegraphic [R 4146/409/92]

BELGRADE, May 18, 1939, 12.55 p.m.

I have now had both the Prince Regent's account and that of Minister for Foreign Affairs of visit to Rome. There is little to tell. Visit was treated mainly as one of courtesy. No important demands were made to Yugoslavia except the desire that she should leave the League of Nations. Pressure to join in Anti-Comintern Pact was not renewed.

2. For the rest Signor Mussolini was profuse in assurances that he had no sinister designs in the Balkans of any kind. He displayed considerable exacerbation at Anglo-Turkish Declaration.

3. General impression gained was that Signor Mussolini is terrified of war. He said he was using all his influence both in Berlin and Warsaw to counsel prudence over Danzig question.

4. The Yugoslav press has of course published long articles emphasizing on the usual lines the cordial relations between Italy and Yugoslavia and their common interest in the Adriatic. They are not worth reporting in detail.

Repeated to Rome, Angora, Athens and Bucharest.

No. 545

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora)

No. 191 Telegraphic [R 4145/661/67]

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 18, 1939, 1.15 p.m.

My telegram No. 182.¹

There will be a debate on Friday, May 19, on foreign policy which will include discussions of Anglo-Turkish Declaration. Question 2 in my telegram under reference will almost inevitably be raised and I propose, if the Turkish Government have no objection, to say that the term 'Mediterranean area' in this declaration includes the Dardanelles and the Adriatic but not the Black Sea. We regard the question of the Black Sea as dependent on the result of the consultations about Balkan security mentioned in paragraph 6 of the Declaration.²

Repeated to Paris.

¹ Not printed. This telegram of May 13 reported the announcement of the Anglo-Turkish Declaration in the House of Commons on May 12. See Parl. Deb., 5th Ser., H. of C., vol. 347, cols. 952-5.

² Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen replied on May 18, in Angora telegram No. 239, that the Turkish Government had no objection to the proposed answer. The question was not raised in the debate.

No. 546

Sir W. Seeds (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax
(Received May 18, 6.30 p.m.)

No. 97 Telegraphic [C 7280/3356/18]

MOSCOW, May 18, 1939, 6.54 p.m.

Angora telegram No. 233.¹

Although the Soviet Government on principle do not trust Poland I have no reason to believe that in the present circumstances they fear a possible German attack with Polish co-operation. Such an attack does not sound sense to me from the Polish point of view. Moreover only definite statement I was able to extract from a very reserved M. Potemkin last night about his travels was that he had found Polish attitude to the German menace much

¹ No. 535.

firmer than a few days ago [*sic*]² owing to the British guarantee. I shall ask the Turkish Ambassador tomorrow on what he bases his statement.

2. If Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs was indeed speaking indirectly on behalf of the Soviet Government I must say that it is just this tendency (as reflected in 'Izvestiya' article³) to ask more and more guarantees as in the case of Finland which makes me inclined to wonder whether the Soviet Government are now serious.

3. But there is absolutely no means of telling for certain and there is no doubt they have reason within limits to desire clearer expression of reciprocity as shown by their reference to Czecho-Slovakia.

4. As they are in a somewhat impetuous mood I trust that an answer may be made to their latest statement without undue delay.

Repeated to Angora.

² This phrase was later corrected to read 'firmer than previously'.

³ See No. 481.

No. 547

Viscount Halifax to Mr. Gallienne (Tallinn)

No. 2 Telegraphic [N 2471/64/63]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 18, 1939, 7.30 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 4.¹

Attitude of His Majesty's Government towards German proposals is set out in my telegrams Nos. 25 to Helsingfors² and 21 to Copenhagen,² and is as you have already explained it to Estonian Government, viz. that, while they cannot take exception to bilateral pacts as such, though doubting their utility, they object to pacts accompanied by express or implied conditions of any sort. They trust that care will be taken to avoid these and have noted with pleasure that Estonian Government are safeguarding their position as regards exchange and transit of goods.

As regards Minister for Foreign Affairs' second question it is clear that if Anglo-Soviet understanding is reached, it should reduce danger of Soviet aggression against Estonia; and, if His Majesty's Government had reason to suspect that such aggression was contemplated, they would naturally be interested in dissuading Soviet Government from it.

Repeated to Riga.

¹ No. 522.

² Not printed.

No. 548

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax
(Received May 18, 7.45 p.m.)

No. 207 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 7262/3356/18]

PARIS, *May 18, 1939*

M. Bonnet begs me to inform you immediately by telephone that the French formula for assistance to or by Russia in case of any change by force

to *status quo* in Central or Eastern Europe (enclosed in my despatch No. 496¹ of April 24) never was meant by French Government to apply to states other than Poland, Roumania or Turkey.

2. French Government never meant this formula to apply to Baltic States, nor do they intend it to apply to the latter.

¹ No. 280.

No. 549

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax
(Received May 19, 9.0 a.m.)

No. 238 Telegraphic [R 4322/661/67]

ANGORA, May 18, 1939, 9.0 p.m.

Your telegram No. 188.¹

I have given Minister for Foreign Affairs in writing such parts as are suitable and have discussed matter with him.

2. Briefly his suggestion is that as you have promised draft of interim understanding you should include in your draft any clause which you consider suitable and desirable from your point of view to meet the case of undertakings to Greece and Roumania. If Turkish Government disagree they can suggest amendments.

3. He explained that there were two points which exercised his mind (a) British guarantees to Greece and Roumania are unilateral and can therefore juridically be withdrawn whenever we see fit. It would be difficult for Turkey on her side to bind herself by a written document to any guarantee in these cases while British guarantee remained as described above. Juridical position which might result would be that Turkey would find herself bound whereas His Majesty's Government were free. He agreed with me that this was really a drafting point. (b) Turkey could not give a guarantee to Roumania which would cover her in the case of an attack by Soviets.

4. Apart from this I think he is prepared to go very far.

5. He told me that as regards Greece, in addition to Balkan Entente his obligations are that if Greece is attacked Turkey must maintain benevolent and armed neutrality. This would involve mobilization.

¹ No. 537.

No. 550

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 19)

No. 307 Saving: Telegraphic [C 7264/3356/18]

PARIS, May 18, 1939

M. Bonnet begs me to tell you that the French Government will be very happy, should you wish it, to support at Moscow the revised formula that His Majesty's Government may decide to propose to the Soviet Government.

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax

(Received May 25)

No. 270 [E 3863/9/44]

ANGORA, May 18, 1939

My Lord,

I had the honour, in my telegram No. 174¹ of 28th April, to inform Your Lordship of the first conversation between my newly-arrived German colleague and the Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs, of which M. Saracoglu had been good enough to give me an account.

2. Herr von Papen's reception here has not been warm. Indeed, it is hard to believe that the German Government can have been so blind to their own interests as to insist, against the wishes of the Turkish Government, on appointing an Ambassador who is already so unfortunately remembered and so completely distrusted in this country.

3. Herr von Papen has undoubtedly come in for some very plain speaking, and he can be under no misconception as to what is felt about him here, and what is felt about his country.

4. There is little room for doubt that neither he nor his Government had real knowledge as to the advanced state of our negotiations with the Turkish Government at the time of his arrival, and Herr von Papen appears to have been quite frank in admitting to more than one of his hearers that he had come too late.

5. His riposte shows signs of this lack of preparation. He pleaded with the Turkish Government for delay and promised some favourable proposal from the side of the Axis. This in itself goes to show that the German Government had been taken by surprise. Otherwise Herr von Papen would have been able to produce his counter-attraction at once in some more perceptible form. But, as reported in my telegram No. 201² of the 8th May, it was not until pressed by M. Numan Menemencioglu, the Secretary-General, that Herr von Papen gave any indication as to the nature of the proposal which he hoped shortly to put forward.

6. When these arguments proved unavailing, Herr von Papen fell back on threats as to the power of Germany to cut off trade with this country, and he appears finally to have adopted a vaguely menacing tone, indicating that Turkey would do well to think twice before placing herself in British hands. His Majesty's Government could not permanently divert the natural course of trade to the extent of compensating Turkey indefinitely for loss of the German market, though she might do so for two or three years. On the political side, it was His Majesty's Government who were working for a war, and their policy of encirclement was continually bringing war nearer.

7. M. Saracoglu gave me, on the 17th May,³ an outline of his farewell conversation with Herr von Papen, who had used the arguments outlined in

¹ No. 302.

² No. 414.

³ See No. 536.

the preceding paragraphs. In reply to Herr von Papen's suggestion that Germany might close her markets, His Excellency had pointed out that hitherto Turkey had been more than amenable to German commercial methods. She had allowed Germany to overcharge her systematically for goods purchased by Turkey. The market might indeed be closed down, but Germany would have great difficulty in finding another customer so complacent.

8. On the political side, M. Saracoglu had reminded Herr von Papen that in 1911 Kaiser Wilhelm II, who had proclaimed himself the protector of Moslems, had in that capacity allowed his Italian allies to dismember his Turkish friends. The present situation was analogous: Germany and Italy stood together and constituted a threat to the Eastern Mediterranean and to Turkey.

9. To Herr von Papen's argument that it was His Majesty's Government who were preparing war by their encirclement policy, M. Saracoglu had answered, with perfect logic, that His Majesty's Government had no such intention, but that, after the successive seizures of Austria, the Sudetenland, Czecho-Slovakia and finally Albania, His Majesty's Government and the other European Powers were naturally drawing together to ensure against further aggression.

10. With regard to Italy, Herr von Papen appears to have repeated the statement of which I had the honour to inform Your Lordship in my telegram No. 174, that it was Germany who controlled Italian policy. My United States colleague had even heard on good authority that the German Ambassador had gone so far as to offer the Dodecanese to Turkey, though I have been unable to verify this story.

11. In any case, my German colleague has now left, on the night of the 16th May, for Berlin to report, as he put it smilingly to me the same morning, 'on the situation which you have created'. I said I was sorry that in the short time I should have no opportunity of conversation with him. We arranged that he should inform me as soon as he returned, which he hoped would be within a fortnight.

12. My Military Attaché was on Herr von Papen's train to Haydarpasa the same evening and had some conversation with His Excellency.

13. Herr von Papen stated that he had been following the British press and had come to the conclusion that there was still a body of public opinion in England which was prepared to seek a European settlement by means of a conference. He based his view on certain correspondence in 'The Times', and informed Colonel Ross that he had recently written personally to the Prime Minister⁴ whom he had known as Chancellor of the Exchequer during the Lausanne Conference when he himself was Chancellor of the Reich. Herr von Papen also mentioned Danzig, stating that in his opinion Herr Hitler's offer to the Polish Government was a perfectly good one, and that under this offer the Poles would still have been able to use Danzig. There had been no question of cutting Poland off from the sea, while, on the other

⁴ It has not been possible to trace any such letter in the Foreign Office archives.

hand, the German corridor through the Polish Corridor was quite a normal requirement.

14. I am sending a copy of this despatch to His Majesty's Ambassador in Berlin.

I have, &c.,

H. KNATCHBULL-HUGESSEN

No. 552

Letter from Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Sir A. Cadogan

[C 7457/15/18]

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, *May 18, 1939*

I enclose an interesting memorandum of information which I have received from the Military Attaché.

I have little doubt that the Germans are doing all they can to secure the definite neutrality of Soviet Russia. I had heard myself from another source of General Sirovy's¹ visit to Moscow in German interests! One never reads anything against the U.S.S.R. in the German press nowadays!

NEVILLE HENDERSON

¹ The former Prime Minister of Czecho-Slovakia.

ENCLOSURE IN No. 552

BERLIN, *May 17, 1939*

The Ambassador.

1. A Retired Officer with very good connections in the War Ministry, who has already proved of value on several occasions, informs me that Generaloberst von Fritsch came to Berlin about a week ago from his retirement at Munsterlager, and is interesting himself in current affairs. My source saw a letter written by von Fritsch the other day to 'one of the biggest men in the Nazi hierarchy' in which von Fritsch stated that after reviewing the difficult situation into which Herr Hitler had brought Germany he was convinced that the only solution was to get together with Russia.

2. My source also said that Oberst Nicolai, whom I have previously reported¹ as being one of the Führer's most intimate military advisers, is also doing all he can to urge a *rapprochement* with Russia.

In this connection a usually well informed Colleague told me yesterday that he understood that negotiations between Germany and Russia were being initiated by indirect methods via the German Embassy in Ankara, and that one of von Papen's chief side lines in his new post was the furtherance of Russo-German relations.

¹ It has not been possible to trace this report in the Foreign Office archives. Colonel Nicolai had served as Chief of German Military Intelligence during the 1914-18 war, and subsequently, as a retired officer, had been employed on various special duties under General von Seeckt. He was known as an advocate of closer contacts with the U.S.S.R.

3. I also hear through a nephew of the German Ambassador in Paris that General Sirovy arrived in Moscow on behalf of the German Government three days before Litvinov's fall.

4. I gather from many quarters that the German Army is vigorously renewing its efforts of a few years ago to arrive at a military alliance with Russia. However much the Higher Command may dislike the prospect of a *major* war on *two* fronts in the German Army's present state of evolution, I believe that they might well be expected to go so far as to press for war if Russia should play their game even only to the extent of remaining neutral.

F. N. MASON-MACFARLANE
Colonel, Military Attaché

No. 553

Viscount Halifax to Sir R. Campbell (Belgrade)
No. 147 Telegraphic [R 4102/661/67]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 19, 1939, 7.40 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 113.¹

Reuter's telegraphed full report and we think it is clear that the reasons for the unsatisfactory comments are to be found in Belgrade. In the circumstances we fear there would be little use sending for the local Yugoslav correspondents. We are speaking however to the Press Attaché to the Yugoslav Legation.

¹ No. 526.

No. 554

Viscount Halifax to Sir W. Seeds (Moscow)
No. 111 Telegraphic [C 7065/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 19, 1939, 8.0 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 93.¹

1. His Majesty's Government have reply of Soviet Government under careful consideration. It clarifies attitude of Soviet Government and we now know the difficulties that have to be overcome in order to secure co-operation which both our Governments desire.

2. His Majesty's Government for their part will make every effort to find means of reaching agreement with the Soviet Government. But it seems that any solution that we may hope to propose would require full Cabinet approval, and it would be necessary, before submitting it to the Cabinet, to exchange views with and, if possible, secure the concurrence of other Governments, so that it could not come before the Cabinet before next Wednesday.²

3. It is to be hoped that a communication might be made to the Soviet Government without delay thereafter.

¹ No. 520.

² May 24.

4. In meanwhile, I hope to have advantage of intimate discussions with M. Maisky at Geneva, who presumably knows views of Soviet Government.

5. Please speak in above sense to Commissar for Foreign Affairs. Soviet Ambassador has been spoken to on these lines.

Repeated to Paris.

No. 555

Sir R. Campbell (Belgrade) to Viscount Halifax
(Received May 20, 9.30 p.m.)

No. 115 Telegraphic [R 4234/661/67]

BELGRADE, May 19, 1939, 9.20 p.m.

In the course of interview which I sought with the Minister for Foreign Affairs in order to complain of the attitude of the Yugoslav press in the matter of Anglo-Turkish Declaration (my telegram No. 113¹) he showed some tendency to complain that Yugoslav Government had been kept in the dark. I said that in view of Balkan family relations it seemed to me rather for the Turkish Government than for His Majesty's Government to inform their allies at the proper time and that I happened to know that my Turkish colleague had applied for an interview with him (the Minister for Foreign Affairs) three days before he left for Rome but presumably owing to pressure of work had not been received and had been obliged to make his communication to Acting Secretary-General on the eve of M. Markovitch's departure. As the Minister for Foreign Affairs seemed inclined to stick to his point I reminded him politely that Yugoslavia's allies had not been informed of Italian-Yugoslav Treaty of 1937² until the day before signature, and that it would therefore be unbecoming of the Yugoslav Government to show too much rancour on the present occasion.

2. Although the Minister for Foreign Affairs did not mention the following aspect to me I understand his experts have been examining question whether the conclusion of Anglo-Turkish arrangement without previous consultation between Turkey and her partners can be claimed to constitute no infringement of Balkan pact.

3. I think in their heart of hearts the Yugoslav Government are pleased that arrangement has been concluded and that pique which they have been displaying is due partly to fear of getting into trouble with Axis Powers owing to mention of Balkan security (see paragraph E in Intel No. 45³) and partly to wound inflicted on their *amour propre*.

4. When the Minister for Foreign Affairs asked me to explain the meaning of passage relating to Balkan security I developed the theory that anything which increased security of one Balkan state must obviously operate to

¹ No. 526.

² The text of the Treaty is printed in *British and Foreign State Papers*, Vol. 141, p. 1119.

³ Not printed. The reference appears to be to Intel No. 43 of May 11, which summarized the text of the Anglo-Turkish Declaration.

increase security of all. If the Turkish Government felt able to give some further and more precise explanation it would, I am sure, go far to soothe ruffled feelings here.⁴

5. When I asked my Roumanian colleague some days ago what had passed between him and the Minister for Foreign Affairs at the interview at which the latter raised the question of Anglo-Turkish Declaration a few hours before his departure for Rome he told me that M. Markovitch had said that the matter was a serious one but had said nothing to the effect that Yugoslavia might have to take a grave decision (Angora telegram No. 204⁵). After telephoning to M. Gafencu my Roumanian colleague again saw the Minister for Foreign Affairs and begged him to defer judgment in the matter until after his return from Rome and they (M. Gafencu and M. Markovitch) had been able to meet and talk things over. I understand this meeting is arranged in principle for May 21.

Repeated to Angora, Athens and Bucharest.

⁴ Sir R. Campbell was informed on May 23 that his language at this interview was approved.

⁵ No. 440.

No. 556

*Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) and
Sir R. Hoare (Bucharest)*

No. 165¹ Telegraphic [C 7523/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 19, 1939, 11.0 p.m.

1. The Polish (Roumanian) Government are aware of the proposal which His Majesty's Government made to the Soviet Government (see my telegram No. 128/165²).

2. The latter have so far been unable to accept an arrangement on these lines and maintain essentially their own proposals, which include an agreement between the Soviet, France and Great Britain, on basis of complete reciprocity, providing for mutual assistance in the event of a direct attack upon any one of them.

3. We anticipate that, if His Majesty's Government and the French Government were able to agree to this, it would be possible to secure in addition Soviet undertaking to assist Poland (Roumania) if that country felt impelled to resist aggression, and if it desired Soviet assistance.

4. If one tries to reduce such an arrangement to a formula, our present idea (which we have of course not communicated to Soviet Government) is that it would have to run somewhat as follows:—

(a) If Russia is engaged in hostilities with a European Power, in consequence either of aggression by that Power against another European State which has requested Russian assistance, or of aggression by that Power against Russia, France and Great Britain will give Russia all the support and assistance in their power.

¹ No. 165 to Warsaw, No. 232 to Bucharest.

² No. 304.

(b) If France and Great Britain are engaged in hostilities with a European Power, in consequence either of aggression by that Power against another European State which has requested their assistance, or of aggression by that Power against either of them, Russia will give France and Great Britain all the support and assistance in her power.

(c) The three Governments will concert together as to the methods by which such mutual support and assistance could, in case of need, be made most effective.

(d) It is understood that the rendering of support and assistance in the above cases is without prejudice to the rights and position of other Powers.

5. We have hitherto resisted the Soviet demand for a Three-Power Pact of mutual assistance, having regard to the fact that we had inferred, from exchanges of views with Polish (Roumanian) Government, that this closer and more automatic association of the Soviet Government with ourselves and therefore indirectly with them would cause them embarrassment and might, in their opinion, give just that provocation that was needed to impel Germany to aggressive action.

6. We may however be approaching the point at which we shall have to choose between some such formula and a break-down in the negotiation, with all that that might involve.

7. His Majesty's Government would be glad to know, at their earliest convenience, what would be the reaction of the Polish (Roumanian) Government to the situation which we may have to contemplate, and what their judgment would be on a formula such as that sketched above.

8. The Polish (Roumanian) Government will observe that (1) in paragraph (a) of the formula, Soviet assistance would only be rendered, in the event of Poland (Roumania) being aggressed, if the latter 'requested' it; and (2) in the event of the Soviet, by virtue of the three-Power Pact, coming to the assistance of France or Great Britain, she would do so, under paragraph (d) of the formula 'without prejudice to the rights and position of other Powers'. This is intended to mean, for example, that Soviet forces would not be entitled to enter or cross Polish (Roumanian) territory without the consent of the Polish (Roumanian) Government.

9. I should be glad of a reply, if possible, early next week.

Repeated to Paris, Moscow, Angora, Riga and Helsingfors.

No. 557

Sir P. Loraine (Rome) to Viscount Halifax
(Received May 20, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 471 Telegraphic [R 4225/57/22]

ROME, May 19, 1939, 11.0 p.m.

Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs leaves tomorrow for Berlin and is to sign the Italian-German Alliance on Monday.¹

¹ May 22.

2. I had a brief interview with him this evening and asked him whether in his opinion the conclusion of the alliance would make development of Anglo-Italian friendly relations easier or harder.

3. He said probably easier for it would get out of the way the frequent French press suggestions that the Axis was breaking up. I asked him whether these were really a very serious factor. He said they produced irritability. I enquired whether he had any similar complaints as regards the British press. He replied in the negative.

4. Foregoing seems confirmation of report which had reached me that a series of recent French press comments on the weakening of the Axis precipitated Signor Mussolini's alliance with Germany.

Repeated to Berlin.

No. 558

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw)

No. 21 Saving: Telegraphic [C 6910/54/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 19, 1939

Your telegrams Nos. 139¹ and 151² and my telegrams Nos. 137,³ 151⁴ and 152.⁵

Position as regards maintenance of contact with Polish Government concerning possible German action in Danzig seems to be as follows:

(i) M. Beck has given no undertaking to consult His Majesty's Government before taking action which might lead to war but he has promised to inform them of any development which might necessitate action on the part of Poland.

(ii) As regards prior information concerning the action of the Polish Government in the event of an immediate threat arising and giving no time for consultation, M. Beck has promised to inform His Majesty's Government of any development necessitating action by Polish Government but he cannot state what action the Polish Government would take in a hypothetical case.

(iii) As regards the Polish attitude in the event of the Free City declaring and making effective its union with Germany without German military occupation, M. Beck has stated that such a step would lead to an 'appropriate reaction' on the part of the Polish Government. He is convinced that Germany would be involved, and Polish Government would react energetically and in a measure proportionate to action taken by Danzig or Germany.

2. While resulting position is somewhat indefinite, any attempt to press M. Beck further on these points at the present time is unlikely to be successful. M. Beck is aware of our anxiety lest the Polish Government should embark too rashly on any action and they will no doubt be restrained from so acting by the consideration that if Poland is involved in a war with Germany, the guarantee of His Majesty's Government will not prevent invasion and possibly even the temporary occupation of Poland.

¹ No. 355.

² No. 459.

³ No. 346.

⁴ No. 442.

⁵ No. 439.

3. Subject to your views, I do not therefore propose to instruct you to take up these points again with M. Beck, but I rely on Your Excellency to keep in close touch with him and to make sure as far as you can that you are kept informed at the earliest possible stage of any steps contemplated by the Polish Government to counteract German action in Danzig.

Repeated to Berlin and Danzig.

No. 559

Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)

No. 1000 [C 7386/15/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 19, 1939*

Sir,

I had an opportunity yesterday of a private conversation with the German Ambassador. I began by asking him to give me his impressions as frankly as he liked of feeling in Germany and as he had found it in this country on his return.

2. The Ambassador started off by speaking on familiar lines in regard to the predominant German feeling about encirclement. They so interpreted British policy, both in its political and its economic implications. There were two fears always present to the German mind: encirclement and inflation. They were genuinely alarmed at the activity that this country seemed to be displaying in the sense of the first. It was also felt in Germany that we were concerned to put all the difficulties we could in the way of German trade. Action that we had taken or were taking in the Balkans was so interpreted; they had also evidence that in other countries—he mentioned Iraq—we were doing our best to make it difficult for German trade to maintain its position.

3. He had also felt since returning to England that there was a definitely war atmosphere being established here. He quoted some conversation that he had had since his return, in which his interlocutor had said: 'We have all made up our minds that war is unavoidable, and the only question is when it comes.' All this, he thought, was in the highest degree dangerous.

4. I replied that he could entirely dismiss from his thought the idea that anyone in England or in France had the smallest desire to initiate a war against Germany. The feeling here was very different. The action of Germany in Czecho-Slovakia had given a profound shock to English opinion, and everybody had begun to ask themselves whether it was not possible that the German Chancellor did, in fact, cherish wider designs of establishing Germany in a position of complete domination on the Continent by the destruction of one country after another, at the end of which he would be in a position to challenge Great Britain or France, or anybody else he liked. While the last thing the British people desired was war, they were absolutely determined that they were not going to be dominated by Herr Hitler and were not going to see the destruction of the independence of any more States, because, if this were to take place, they realised that they were confronted with something much more far-reaching and fundamental. It was for that

reason that Great Britain had naturally and inevitably drawn together with other countries who wished for an orderly Europe. It might be, as he had suggested, that all this policy was founded on a tragic misunderstanding and that Herr Hitler had no such intention in his mind. If this was indeed so, there would then be no war, but no responsible person in Germany should be under any illusion that, if Herr Hitler were to take action that threatened the independence of those European States to whom we had given guarantees, we should unhesitatingly fulfil our obligation, and that would mean war.

5. The Ambassador commented on this by saying that he was certain that the German Chancellor had no such ideas in his mind. He was a very sensible man and he could realise as well as anybody else how formidable was the combination that we had succeeded in creating. The Ambassador recapitulated it—'Great Britain, France, Poland, Russia, Turkey, with the United States just behind. If Germany had been unable to win the last war because of the odds with which she was then confronted, it was quite certain that she could not be assured of winning another one against the present combination, certainly not of winning it without imposing disaster upon herself.' To this, I repeated that if this in truth was Herr Hitler's mind, there was no cause to fear that any breach of the peace would come from ourselves or those with whom we were associated.

6. The conversation then turned to Danzig, which the Ambassador recognised to be the point of greatest present anxiety. He said that he knew the Danzig problem well, and felt that we had invested Poland with dangerous powers of decision upon so grave an issue. It was essential that the question should be settled, but there was no reason, if the Poles would be reasonable, why a settlement should not be found which would challenge neither their independence nor their security.

7. I told the Ambassador that on this affair also I conceived that German action in Czecho-Slovakia had exercised a most unhappy influence. After the Berchtesgaden conversation between Herr Hitler and Colonel Beck, the occupation of Czecho-Slovakia had no doubt had the result of making the Polish Government feel that German pledges were of small account, and that the proposals made in regard to Danzig by the German Government were accordingly merely an approach to some further development that would directly menace the position of Poland. I could very well understand the anxiety of the Poles lest at some future time the Germans, having secured possession of Danzig, should proceed to fortify it as they were doing with Memel. My own view about the Danzig situation was plain. It seemed that at the present time and in the present atmosphere it was out of the question to expect any reasonable settlement and immediate negotiations were therefore probably not possible. There seemed accordingly to be only two alternatives. One was that the Germans should attempt to solve the question by force: that would mean war. The other was that time should be gained during which the temperature might drop, and during which preparations might be quietly made for securing free and reasonable discussion of this very thorny subject. We were as anxious as anybody else to see the Danzig

question settled and it ought to be possible to find a peaceful solution of it. But if the German Government were going to attempt either to settle it by force or to insist upon 100 per cent. German settlement with the German army mobilised behind the frontier to further the conduct of the negotiations, a catastrophe was bound to follow. So far as the British people were concerned, they had come to the end of their willingness to take part in negotiations dictated under threat of force. To any free and reasonable effort at negotiation, on the other hand, they would always lend full support. I felt pretty sure that no settlement that involved the complete return of Danzig to German sovereignty was likely to be acceptable to Poland. But while Poland must recognise the obvious fact that Danzig was predominantly German, Herr Hitler seemed from his speech willing to realise that Poland must have secure access to the sea. The two interests in Danzig had somehow to be reconciled, and in this connexion I had constantly asked myself what exactly Herr Hitler had had in mind when he had spoken in his speech of Danzig as a 'free State within the German Reich'.

8. Whether or not, however, it might be possible at some future time to reach a measure of agreement on this matter, it was certainly not possible immediately, and, therefore, all those concerned who wished to avoid war must apply their efforts to gain time and reduce tension. I told the Ambassador that some time ago, before we had given our guarantee to Poland, I had told the Polish Ambassador quite frankly what our position in regard to Danzig would be.¹ That position was that no one would be more pleased than ourselves to see a friendly settlement arrived at between Poland and Germany. We recognised the special interest of the German Government in the matter, but, if out of any unilateral attempt at action by the German Government on Danzig a threat were to emerge to Polish independence, that would inevitably bring us into war.

9. The Ambassador agreed that time was essential, and that he felt pretty sure that Herr Hitler did not mean to take any forcible action.

10. In the course of some discussion upon the possibilities of taking any action to improve Anglo-German relations, two or three subjects were mentioned of which it is perhaps worth while making a brief note. The first was the attitude of the press in Germany and Great Britain, which I have recorded separately.² Another was the matter of industrial and trade exchanges, in regard to which the Ambassador told me that he understood German industrialists to be coming over to this country in June for some further discussion with British industrial representatives.³ It was, I think, in the Ambassador's mind that out of these unofficial contacts something more valuable might grow, but he invited no expression of opinion from me, and I gave none. During the conversation on these topics I said that I hoped the German Government might be able themselves to show some evidence of intention that would bring a measure of reassurance to the world. If the intentions of the Chancellor were as he had portrayed them, was it impossible

¹ See Volume IV of this Series, No. 471.

² See No. 560.

³ This visit did not take place.

for him to find an opportunity of making a speech that would, without the usual accompaniment of insults to democracy, make it plain, so far as words could, that he did not look any longer to forcible solutions, but was content to seek a solution of any outstanding questions with free and *bona fide* methods of negotiation. If he would do something of the kind there would, of course, be plenty of people who would say that it was nothing but empty words on which no reliance could be placed, but I could guarantee him that any such step on the part of the Chancellor would immediately evoke a favourable response in official quarters on this side, and I thought that, if something on these lines could be done both in Germany and in England, it might have a valuable effect in reducing present anxiety by opening the door to further improvement later.

11. When the Ambassador undertook to transmit what I had said to Berlin, I asked him to whom he would transmit it. Was it possible for him to get it direct to the highest quarter? This, he said, was difficult, but he would do his best. He observed, incidentally, that Herr von Ribbentrop was not so bad as he was painted in this country.

12. The whole conversation throughout was most friendly and, as will be gathered from my record of it, we both spoke to each other with complete frankness. Whether it will have any practical result of value is no doubt a matter on which it is impossible to feel any great confidence.

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

No. 560

Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)

No. 1002 [C 7387/16/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 19, 1939*

Sir,

During the course of a conversation with the German Ambassador yesterday, Herr von Dirksen referred to the question of the press. On both sides much harm was being done by press attacks. Could we not have a press truce? If we did agree to do so, the German Government could, of course, implement it 100 per cent., and we might implement it perhaps 75 per cent., if I were able to exercise influence upon newspaper owners. I told the Ambassador that I should always be willing to consider this, but that the problem would largely solve itself if the German Government could take action and pursue a policy that would allow things to become more normal. I was, however, quite ready to try to go further, and, if the Ambassador could feel himself authorised to write me a letter saying that, if our press were able to moderate its tone, he could guarantee the German press would do the same, I would see whether I could do anything with the owners of the principal newspapers. The Ambassador promised to explore this suggestion.

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

No. 561

Sir W. Seeds (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 20, 3.45 p.m.)
No. 98 Telegraphic [C 7406/3356/18]

MOSCOW, May 20, 1939, 2.33 p.m.

My telegram No. 97.¹

Basing himself on conversation with M. Potemkin, Turkish Ambassador put the wishes of Soviet Government regarding Baltic region as follows:—

(a) Promise of British and French assistance in the event of a German attack developing on Russia through Baltic States or by sea as a result of hostilities arising out of British guarantees to Poland and Roumania.

(b) Promise of British and French assistance in the event of an attack as above *after* Danzig and other questions now at issue between Poland and Germany had been settled by agreement or otherwise; in other words when Germany might wish to wreak vengeance on Soviet Union with Poland neutral and after our own present commitments in Eastern Europe might be held to have lapsed.

(c) In return for undertaking (provided for in our proposals hitherto) that if Great Britain on her own initiative implements her guarantee to Poland and Roumania, Soviet Union will come in if desired, Soviet Government want from us similar undertaking to assist if they wish to implement what Turkish Ambassador called their guarantees (Riga telegram No. 7²) to Estonia and Latvia.

Repeated to Angora.

¹ No. 546.

² No. 181.

No. 562

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw)
No. 166 Telegraphic [C 7005/1110/55]

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 20, 1939, 5.0 p.m.

My telegram No. 161.¹

Following is text of *aide-mémoire* handed to Polish Ambassador this morning. Begins.

His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom have given preliminary consideration to the *aide-mémoire* handed on May 12 by the Polish Ambassador to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs on the subject of financial assistance to Poland.

2. In view of the financial commitments which have already been incurred by His Majesty's Government in respect of their own rearmament programme, it is not possible to envisage financial assistance on the scale suggested. In particular, His Majesty's Government could not agree to financial credits or

¹ Not printed. This telegram summarized the interview with the Polish Ambassador recorded in No. 508.

credits for purchasing material, except to the extent that such credits are required for goods or material produced in the United Kingdom.

3. Subject to this, His Majesty's Government will be glad to receive a Polish delegation in London, at any time convenient to the Polish Government, to discuss the position with them.

Ends.

Repeated to Paris.

No. 563

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 21, 10.0 a.m.)

No. 169 Telegraphic [C 7409/54/18]

WARSAW, May 20, 1939, 5.20 p.m.

My despatch No. 138.¹

German Ambassador tells me that anti-German disturbances at Tomaszow a week ago were very much more serious than had been mentioned in the press. He read me reports from his consular representative at Lodz according to which a regular pogrom had taken place there on May 13 as a result of which, while there had been only one death, hundreds of Germans had had their windows broken or their houses demolished and had had to take refuge in the woods. Herr von Moltke said that these demonstrations were largely the result of an anti-German meeting organised by Ozon² regarding which a proclamation had been posted in the town some days before the meeting and that public opinion had thereby been aroused in anti-German sense with lamentable results which in his opinion exceeded anything which had occurred since the war.

2. I took opportunity of a visit to Minister for Foreign Affairs today to draw his attention to the fact that these incidents had clearly been far more serious than was generally known and that police had apparently not taken sufficiently energetic measures to prevent the mob getting out of hand. He told me that he was not yet sufficiently acquainted with details but admitted that whereas authorities had feared . . . s³ of this kind at Lodz and had even reinforced police there, disorders at Tomaszow had taken authorities by surprise and possibly local police forces had not been sufficient to prevent matters getting out of hand. He told me that with approval of Minister of Interior, he is sending Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs to all centres where there are German minority elements to enquire into state of affairs and how far full precautions have been taken to prevent anti-German disturbances. Even German Ambassador admitted instructions had in fact been issued to local authorities to take every possible precaution in this respect.

Repeated to Berlin and Geneva.

¹ Not printed. This despatch of May 17 reported the incidents at Tomaszow.

² The Oboz Zjednoczenia Narodowego, i.e. Camp of National Union, the Polish Government party.

³ The text is here uncertain.

No. 564

*Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 20, 8.0 p.m.)
No. 167 Telegraphic [C 7408/54/18]*

WARSAW, May 20, 1939, 5.21 p.m.

Danzig telegram No. 8 Saving.¹

I asked Minister for Foreign Affairs what information he had as to infiltration of German military elements into Danzig. He told me that he had received similar information, but did not think that exaggerated importance should be attached to these rumours.

2. He told me incidentally that the Senate have requested that negotiations should be initiated regarding certain economic questions more especially quotas. M. Beck is replying that he is prepared to enter into such negotiations and he informs me that he is even ready to make certain concessions in spite of the political tension at present existing.

Repeated to Geneva, Berlin and Danzig.

¹ No. 538.

No. 565

*Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 20, 8.0 p.m.)
No. 166 Telegraphic [C 7417/350/21]*

WARSAW, May 20, 1939, 5.22 p.m.

Minister for Foreign Affairs tells me Hungarian Government have confidentially communicated to him that they have informed the Reich that in the event of hostilities between Germany and Poland, Germany cannot count on Hungarian aid either as regards its army or passage across its territory. When I asked him what reliance he placed in [*sic* ? on] this declaration he said that at any rate it showed that Hungary was less subservient to German pressure in the new situation created by the British guarantee.

Repeated to Geneva, Berlin and Budapest.

No. 566

*Sir A. Cadogan¹ to Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora)
No. 196 Telegraphic [R 4266/661/67]*

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 20, 1939, 7.0 p.m.

Following references were made to Turkish negotiations in Prime Minister's speech on May 19.

Begins.

'Our discussions very speedily revealed such a similarity in our interests and outlook that two Governments were enabled to make the Declaration

¹ Lord Halifax had left London on May 20 for Geneva.

of 12th May, which foreshadowed the conclusion of a definitive long-term agreement of a reciprocal nature. The Declaration was very warmly welcomed by this House, and the general satisfaction which has been demonstrated throughout the country shows how high is now the prestige of Turkey in this country, and how greatly her friendship is valued. That friendship was begun under the long and memorable presidency of M. Atatürk and it has been further strengthened under the distinguished present President, General İnönü. I recollect with pleasure that I had an opportunity of meeting him at the Coronation and I would like to say what satisfaction it gives to the members of His Majesty's Government to be able to co-operate so harmoniously with him and his present Ministers. Let me just observe in passing that we attach great importance to the reciprocal character of the agreements which we have made with Turkey and Poland.

The long-term agreement cannot, of course, be concluded in the twinkling of an eye, and in these days events move so quickly that it does not seem advisable to wait. It did not seem to us advisable to wait until that agreement could be concluded before making clear to one another and to the world where we should stand in the event of an act of aggression leading to war in the Mediterranean area. We have declared our intention in that event to give one another mutual aid and co-operation, but the House will remember that this declaration goes further than the Mediterranean; it recognises the necessity of ensuring the establishment of security in the Balkans. We have agreed that on that matter we shall have consultations together, the results of which, I have no doubt, we shall be able to embody in the long-term treaty.²

Ends.

Declaration was warmly welcomed by other speakers.

² See Parl. Deb., 5th Ser., H. of C., vol. 347, cols. 1828-40.

No. 567

Sir R. Hoare (Bucharest) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 21, 10.0 a.m.)
No. 220 Telegraphic [C 7412/3356/18]

BUCHAREST, May 20, 1939, 8.10 p.m.

Your telegram No. 232.¹

Minister for Foreign Affairs promises prompt reply.

His personal reaction is that the proposal savours too much of the out-worn technique of collective security and he still feels that whatever engagement the Soviet Government did or did not take their conduct if it came to the point would be guided solely by self-interest. He inclines to a reply to the effect that if negotiation is pursued on the line suggested it should be without the formal knowledge of Roumanian Government.

¹ No. 556.

Mr. Shepherd (Danzig) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 22)

No. 9 Saving: Telegraphic [C 7453/54/18]

DANZIG, May 20, 1939

My telegram No. 8 Saving.¹

Whereas normally the extensive stands, etc., which are annually erected on parade ground here for review of National Socialist organizations on May 1 are removed promptly after that event, this year they are still in position although no event is advertised for which they might be used.

2. On May 2 Senator for Education, speaking in Danzig Town Hall to a group of teachers who had just been promoted, stressed the need for redoubled loyalty to the Führer because Danzig would shortly (demnächst) be re-incorporated with Germany.

3. I learn indirectly from an employee at Danzig aerodrome that between May 7 and May 10 aeroplanes with screened lights landed there at night and discharged heavy and light machine-guns which were moved by members of the S.S. and S.A.

4. I learn also indirectly from a member of the East Prussian Flying Corps that military forces at Elbing are in an absolute state of preparedness.

5. These circumstances and Dr. Goebbels' reference at Cologne on May 19 to Danzig and the Corridor, which are declared by responsible officials and others here to be inseparable, tend to confirm my belief that an attempt may be made shortly—perhaps in conjunction with celebration of Danzig district Labour Week at beginning of June when Dr. Goebbels is advertised to visit Danzig—to solve this problem along the lines suggested in last paragraph of my telegram No. 8 Saving.

Repeated to Berlin and Warsaw.

¹ No. 538.

No. 569

Extract from Record¹ of Conversation between the Secretary of State and MM. Daladier and Bonnet at the Ministry of War in Paris on May 20, 1939. (Received in Foreign Office May 23)

[C 7515/54/18]

Poland and Danzig

M. Bonnet said that the French Government would be glad if His Majesty's Government could conclude their formal written Agreement with the Polish Government as soon as possible. The French and Polish Governments were in process of adjusting their mutual obligations to bring them into harmony with the declaration made by the French Government at the same time as His

¹ This record, and that printed as No. 570, were made by the British representatives for the use of His Majesty's Government. For other subjects discussed with the French Ministers see Nos. 570 and 576.

Majesty's Government's declaration to Poland, and it was desirable that the French Government and His Majesty's Government should proceed on parallel lines.

Lord Halifax explained that no steps had yet been taken to reduce our Agreement with Poland to writing. He thought it better to finish off the Russian negotiations first.

M. Bonnet said that he had understood from the Polish Ambassador that we had pushed our Agreement with the Polish Government rather far.

Lord Halifax explained that at the end of the conversations with M. Beck a summary of conclusions² had been drawn up which laid down the general principles of the written Agreement, but that nothing more than this had been done. The purport of these conclusions had been communicated to M. Bonnet by Sir E. Phipps at the time. Since then the Polish Government had given His Majesty's Government a private assurance that in the event of the United Kingdom being involved in war in defence of Belgium, Holland, or Denmark (not Switzerland), Poland would intervene on her side.³

M. Bonnet explained that in the Protocol which was being drawn up between the French and Polish Governments, the circumstance which would govern the intervention of one Government on behalf of the other would be a threat to vital interests.

Lord Halifax said that these words did not occur in any of the declarations made by His Majesty's Government. The conditions for British help to Poland were first that there should be a clear threat to Polish independence, and secondly, that Poland should resist.

M. Bonnet said that the Polish Government wished to annex to the Franco-Polish Protocol a declaration to the effect that Poland regarded Danzig as a vital interest. He asked what view His Majesty's Government took of this question.

Lord Halifax replied that he had told M. Beck that His Majesty's Government were of course anxious to see agreement reached about Danzig between Poland and Germany, and that if this could be achieved so much the better. If, however, out of the Danzig question there should emerge a situation which threatened Polish independence, he had told M. Beck that Great Britain would be with Poland. M. Beck had made it plain in London that if Germany seized Danzig or entered the Corridor, Poland would regard this as a threat to her independence. This would evidently be a vital interest to Poland.

M. Daladier asked what would happen if the Senate were to vote the union of Danzig with Germany, and if matters should stop there and nothing further be done.

Lord Halifax said that His Majesty's Ambassador at Warsaw had discussed this and other questions with M. Beck. The result of these discussions had

² See No. 16.

³ See No. 164.

been summarised in a telegram sent to His Majesty's Ambassador at Warsaw on the 19th May.⁴ Lord Halifax then read to the French Ministers paragraph 2 of the telegram in question.

He said that, so far as Poland's action was concerned, safety lay in the fact that, in the event of trouble, Poland would obviously be the first to suffer, and to suffer disastrously.

He enquired whether the French Ministers had considered how best to use the next few months in the interest of a solution of the Danzig question. He himself had been thinking about this. He had been impressed by the phrase in Herr Hitler's speech about Danzig being a Free City within the Reich. He had gathered from M. Beck that the chief concern of the Polish Government was that Danzig should not be returned to Germany in full sovereignty, and that it should not be fortified.

M. Daladier observed that if Germany mounted guns at Danzig, Gdynia would be commanded and Poland would be finished. Poland would be a German protectorate.

Lord Halifax continued that, on the other hand, M. Beck gave him to understand that he would go a long way to give the Germans what they wanted in matters of internal administration, and might even surrender the conduct of Danzig's foreign relations to Germany.

He wondered whether it would be possible to find a plan by which the special character of the Free City might be maintained in the sense that it would not be fortified or occupied by German troops. Danzig would be administered as a German city and might even be represented in the Reichstag; but it would have a special Constitution which would be placed under the guarantee, not of the League of Nations, but of other Powers such as Germany, France, Great Britain and Poland.

M. Daladier thought this plan was interesting. The German character of Danzig was incontestable; but the creation of a neutralised Free City might be one way of solving the question. It would, however, be impossible for Poland to agree to the construction of an extra-territorial motor road across the Corridor.

Lord Halifax said that his view was that negotiations were not possible in present circumstances, but might it not be possible to look forward to the time when the good offices of, say, the Pope or of the Italian Government might be used. M. Beck might be consulted, and if he agreed, the Pope or the Italian Government might propose some such solution.

M. Daladier thought that the Pope was a possible channel, but the Italian Government were not.

Lord Halifax said that he had information from many quarters indicating that the Italian Government were anxious not to have trouble about Danzig.

⁴ No. 558.

M. Léger observed that in that event the Italian Government would act through the diplomatic channel on their own account.

M. Daladier said that the Italian Government would not be a possible mediator, especially since the conclusion of their alliance with the German Government. The Pope's recent initiative had not been a happy one, but he might be useful in the future, particularly as Poland was a Catholic country.

Lord Halifax thought that the head of the Jesuits in Rome was a Pole.

M. Bonnet reverted to the desirability of making progress with the Anglo-Polish Agreement. It would be difficult for the French to conclude their arrangement with the Poles until they knew what His Majesty's Government were doing, and if they delayed, the Poles might take offence.

Lord Halifax said that he would try and make progress.

M. Léger asked whether His Majesty's Government had sent staff officers to Warsaw.

Lord Halifax replied that they had not yet arrived, but that this matter was in hand.

No. 570

*Extract from Record of Conversation between the Secretary of State and
MM. Daladier and Bonnet at the Ministry of War, in Paris,
May 20, 1939 (Received in Foreign Office May 23)*

[R 4278/7/22]

Franco-Italian Relations

Lord Halifax asked whether the French Ministers had anything to say about Franco-Italian relations.

M. Daladier replied that the situation had not changed. During an interview on other matters between Count Ciano and M. François-Poncet the former had, on his own initiative, informed the latter that the Italian claims were:—

- (1) Two posts on the Suez Canal Board.
- (2) A free port at Jibuti.
- (3) Control of the Ethiopian part of the Jibuti Railway.
- (4) Maintenance of the present régime at Tunis, i.e., the 1896 Treaty.

M. Daladier pointed out that the effect of the Italian proposal was that Italy would keep the territorial advantages which she gained under the Laval-Mussolini Arrangement of 1935, would obtain four important concessions in addition and would give nothing in return. France would be making great concessions to a country who had firmly placed herself in the opposite camp, and would enjoy no reciprocity. It was impossible for France to make such concessions in present circumstances, especially at a time when

Italy had 1,800,000 men under arms. To agree to the Italian demands would be damaging to the prestige and interests of France. The Moslem population in North Africa would think that France had capitulated, and that Mussolini was the stronger. If Italy would agree to a substantial measure of demobilisation and would be reasonable over Tunis, it might be possible for France to make certain concessions, but it would be too humiliating to agree to these demands now, when Italy had doubled her troops in Libya and when the Germans had sent aircraft and material there. To give the Italians a free port at Jibuti and to hand over part of the Jibuti Railway would not be a disaster for France in normal circumstances, but it was impossible in present conditions.

Lord Halifax said that this matter was not, of course, our concern, but he would like to say a word or two.

He felt very strongly the force of what M. Daladier had said, particularly on the psychological side. His experience in India¹ made him conscious of the extreme importance of considering the effect on Moslem opinion in North Africa. He felt, however, that when M. Daladier spoke of making concessions at present his thought was moving in advance of Lord Halifax's. The way Lord Halifax looked at the question was as follows: From many quarters, from private persons, from industrialists, from Lord Perth and from Sir P. Loraine, he had information that the Italian Government were not happy about the military alliance with Germany, and would like, if they could, to get into a position in which they had greater liberty of manœuvre. He could not help feeling that, as regards the capital question of peace and war, it would be well not to overlook the possible value of using Italian influence on the side of peace against German influence in favour of war. The Italian Government were concerned to have something to show their own people in order to strengthen Mussolini's internal position. Italy wanted to get something without war, but in the last resort the pressure on Mussolini might lead to a rash act which would precipitate war. Lord Halifax would have thought the matter could be so handled as not to expose France to the risk of making concessions which she thought ought not to be made, and yet at the same time to save Mussolini's face.

It should be remembered that the position of France and Great Britain was quite different from what it was three months ago. They had embarked upon a policy which was both decisive and firm, and which had had great effect upon the psychology of the whole world. Great Britain, France, Poland, Turkey and, it was to be hoped, Russia, had been rallied together, and the United States were very close to them. Our industrial output, particularly in the matter of aircraft, had grown faster than at one time we had dared to expect. Conscription had been introduced. The general effect of this was to place our partnership in a position of evident strength. With that background, he thought, with respect, that it ought not to be impossible for the French Government to say to the Italian Government that the latter

¹ Lord Halifax was Viceroy of India, 1926-31.

had certain claims which the French were ready to discuss. There were certain things which might be given, and certain other things which could not be given, but the French were ready to talk on the supposition that there would be a contribution from the Italian side also.

He hoped that M. Daladier would not think him presumptuous. He had spoken in this way only because he thought that an improvement in Franco-Italian relations was vital for the world. Great Britain had done her best to meet the wishes of France in the matter of conscription and in the guarantee given to Roumania. His Majesty's Government would now emphasise how important they thought it that no opportunity should be lost, and they thought there was an opportunity, for improving Franco-Italian relations.

M. Daladier thanked Lord Halifax for speaking so frankly. He hoped that Lord Halifax would realise the difficulty of the French position. In a conversation between Count Ciano and M. François-Poncet, the former had made certain demands, but without stating them officially. In a conversation which had followed, there had never been any question of counter-concessions by Italy. Italy was in effect asking for more, while retaining all the advantages of the Laval-Mussolini arrangement of 1935. It was not possible for any French Government to accept such a situation. As he had said, there would in normal circumstances be no insuperable difficulty about giving a free port at Jibuti or handing over the Ethiopian part of the Jibuti Railway, though even these concessions would not be well received in France. But it was impossible for France to allow the 1935 Agreement to be torn up, for her to make still further concessions, and for her to get nothing in return, in an atmosphere such as at present existed. If Italy would demobilise and reduce her garrison in Libya, some concessions might be made which French opinion would accept.

Lord Halifax said that there was great force in all this.

M. Daladier recalled that Italy promised, as part of the 1935 Agreement, to defend the independence of Austria and to resist German aggression. It was in view of this that M. Laval was able to make concessions to Italy. He agreed with Lord Halifax that Italy was at present making no territorial claims against France.

Lord Halifax said the last thing he wished to do was to suggest that the French Government should do anything which they thought not to be in their own best interests.

M. Daladier observed that if he was convinced that he could, by making sacrifices, bring Signor Mussolini and the Italian Government into a better frame of mind, he did not say that he would not make them, but he did not believe that sacrifices would have this result.

Lord Halifax asked if it would be possible, in order not to lose the present opportunity, to convey an indication to the Italian Government that if they were prepared to define their claims, these would not be pigeon-holed.

M. Daladier said that they would be returned with the answer that the French Government could not agree.

Lord Halifax hoped that it would also be added that it was not possible to take them up until the general situation had been improved by measures of demobilisation, &c.

M. Daladier observed that he had already stated this publicly with the unanimous approval of the French Council of Ministers. France could not abandon any of her rights without reciprocity. The shouts in the Italian Chamber about Corsica and Nice at a time when France was threatened by a general strike had created a tremendous effect in France.

He doubted whether the general disposition of the Italian Government would change merely as a result of two or three concessions like a free port at Jibuti. Italy was now in Germany's hands. After Munich he had recognised Ethiopia and sent an Ambassador to Rome. The only answer had been the Genoa speech,² which contained threats against France. Italy seemed to think that France was on the point of disintegration and was coveting France's possessions. The worst thing France could do would be to yield to this campaign of violence and blackmail. That was his position. He recognised that His Majesty's Government naturally would wish France to make concessions.

Lord Halifax said that he would rather put it in another way, namely, that His Majesty's Government thought it would be a pity to lose opportunities if they presented themselves.

M. Daladier said that if Mr. Chamberlain and Lord Halifax were in his place, they would think as he did.³

² This reference is evidently in error for the anti-French demonstrations which occurred during Count Ciano's speech on November 30, 1938 (see Volume III of this Series, No. 461). Signor Mussolini had spoken at Genoa on May 14, 1938 (see Volume III of this Series, No. 479, Enclosure 1).

³ For Lord Halifax's conversation with the French Ministers regarding the negotiations with the Soviet Government see No. 576.

No. 571

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora)

No. 274 [R 4074/661/67]

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 20, 1939

Sir,

The Greek Minister called at this department on the 15th May and produced a telegram despatched by the Greek Minister in Budapest on the 12th May. According to this telegram the Hungarian Minister for Foreign Affairs had asked the Turkish Minister in Budapest why his Government were signing the Anglo-Turkish Agreement, and had tried to persuade the Turkish Minister of the reasons why this step was quite useless, mentioning

that when in Berlin and Rome he had been able to certify the discontent in those capitals with Turkey.

2. The Turkish Minister had replied that following upon recent events in Czecho-Slovakia the intentions of Germany as regards the Black Sea could no longer be disputed. Turkey had therefore had to seek safety against any such eventual danger. The Hungarian Minister for Foreign Affairs had replied that no such danger existed, and that all that Germany and Italy looked for was a strict application of the Straits Convention.

3. The Turkish Minister then asked M. Csaky what was the meaning of the occupation of Albania. The Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs replied that on one side it was designed to bring to an end certain uneasiness in Albania itself, and on the other hand to threaten Greece, which country was thought in Rome to be following an absolutely British policy. This evoked from the Turkish Minister a statement that this explanation fully justified the Turkish attitude, seeing that any threat to Greece constituted not only an indirect but a direct attack on Turkey.

4. I am sending copies of this despatch to His Majesty's Representatives at Athens, Budapest, Belgrade, Sofia and Bucharest.

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

No. 572

Viscount Halifax to Sir S. Waterlow (Athens)

No. 231 [R 4074/661/67]

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 20, 1939

Sir,

With reference to your telegram No. 185¹ of the 6th May I have to inform you that during the course of a conversation at this department on the 15th May the Greek Minister mentioned that his Government were still anxious about concentrations of Italian troops on the Greek border. M. Simopoulos enquired whether this department had any information from His Majesty's Minister at Durazzo. In reply he was told that nothing recent had been received from Sir Andrew Ryan on this subject, and it was felt that the Greek Government's fears were groundless. It seemed perfectly natural that once having landed on the coast, and dug themselves in in the capital, the Italians should seek to make sure of the mountain districts up to the land frontiers of Albania. Surely if the Greek Government or His Majesty's Government had happened to take a similar step in Albania, they would be doing just what the Italians were doing now, namely, making certain that the hinterland was subdued and not likely to give trouble.

2. It was moreover pointed out to the Minister that it was generally accepted that the Italian Government did not want to find themselves at war with His Majesty's Government or anyone else, and yet if they were to attack

¹ No. 390.

Greece, they would in virtue of the guarantee given by His Majesty's Government to Greece bring about the very thing that they did not desire.

3. M. Simopoulos seemed inclined to agree, and hinted that he would send a message to calm his Government.

4. I am sending copies of this despatch to His Majesty's Representatives at Rome and Durazzo.

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

No. 573

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 26)

No. 595 [C 7619/15/18]

BERLIN, May 20, 1939

My Lord,

I began my despatch No. 315¹ of the 9th March by observing that Germany stood at the crossroads, and that the year 1939 might prove decisive as to which of two routes she would follow, namely, either the continuation of the methods of 'smash and grab' or a gradual return to normalcy and international co-operation.

2. An answer was forthcoming within little more than a week of the drafting of that despatch. An unfortunate quarrel between the Czechs and the Slovaks provided Hitler with one of those openings which he is a master of turning to his own advantage. The Slovak Prime Minister, Father Tiso, who had been dismissed by the Czechs, was summoned to Berlin on the 13th March and persuaded to place the fate of his country in Hitler's hands. The Czech President, Dr. Hacha, followed him there on the 14th March and under threats was induced to do likewise. And on the 15th March the world was informed that Bohemia and Moravia had become a German protectorate. Slovakia, a day or so later, was declared to be an independent country under German protection.

3. Hitler's final decision to adopt this course was taken on the 12th March. How long previously it had been contemplated is a matter for conjecture. In all probability it constituted roughly the original plan of the Nazi extremists for a German solution of the Czech question before Munich last year. Thwarted on that occasion and bitterly resentful at being so for personal reasons, some of which I described in the epilogue of the memorandum annexed to my despatch No. 280² of the 6th March, Hitler merely waited for a more favourable opportunity in order to revert to his original scheme. The whole history of his career proves his tenacity, and he can be counted upon to follow a similar procedure in other cases in the future, i.e., Danzig.

¹ See Volume IV of this Series, No. 195.

² Not printed. This memorandum was a report on events in Germany in 1938 sent by Sir N. Henderson in addition to the annual report which was drawn up while he was on leave in England.

4. As a *coup* the German seizure of Bohemia and Moravia was brilliantly successful. Dr. Hacha and Father Tiso signed on the dotted line, thereby giving to Hitler's action a spurious air of legality in the eyes of his own people; the German military occupation was effected with extreme rapidity and efficiency; the Czech nation, disrupted from within as much as from without, offered no resistance; and the world in general, including Germany's own Axis partner, was taken by surprise.

5. History will be the ultimate judge, but it may well be that, in spite of its tactical success, the *coup* may prove to have been a grave political blunder—the second which Hitler has made, if Godesberg be reckoned as the first. The repercussion which it caused in the world generally was immediate and immense. It undermined all sense of security in Europe and left behind it an atmosphere of complete lack of confidence both in Hitler's good faith and in his willingness to abide by any undertaking which he may ever give. This was particularly the case so far as Great Britain was concerned. So long as German actions were confined to the promotion of German interests in predominantly German areas, the British nation had not been inclined actively to intervene. It was not unreasonable to hope that, once Germany's comprehensible and not ignoble aspirations for German unity had been achieved, she would settle down as a satisfied nation. However faint or unjustified by events that hope may have been, and however deplorable and reprehensible the methods which Germany employed to that end, it was felt moreover that a preventive war for the sole object of staving off that unity would not have rallied the united support either of the British nation or the British Empire. But the annexation of Bohemia and Moravia and the destruction thereby of the independence of a free and alien population was not only a complete departure from the racial principle of Hitler's own National Socialist philosophy, but in utter contradiction with the assurances given to the Prime Minister by Hitler last September as well as with the whole spirit of the Munich Agreement. In his letter of the 27th September,³ Hitler had, for instance, given his word that, once the Sudeten Germans were incorporated in the Reich, he would be prepared to guarantee the remainder of Czecho-Slovakia and that there could be no question of any check upon the latter's independence. The Prague *coup* thus constituted a complete breach of faith. Hitler and Dr. Goebbels's propaganda machine have subsequently sought, by specious casuistry, to prove that this was not the case and have quite possibly so persuaded the German nation; but the fact remains. Once again, as with the occupation of Belgium in 1914, German ends have justified German means and the result has been—as in 1914—to drive Great Britain into the opposite camp. As I had the honour to state in my telegram No. 117⁴ of the 16th March to Your Lordship:

'The annexation of Bohemia and Moravia . . . constitutes a wrong which will be always calling for redress, and though it may have afforded Hitler

³ See Volume II of this Series, No. 1144.

⁴ See Volume IV of this Series, No. 288.

and Ribbentrop a facile triumph it would be sad not to believe that in the end it will prove a costly error. . . . His Majesty's Government will doubtless consider what attitude to adopt toward a Government which has shown itself incapable of observing an agreement not six months old.'

6. But, quite apart from the harm which the Prague *coup* did to Germany by alienating all sympathy for her in Britain and in the eyes of the world, there are other material reasons for regarding it as a political error. It was unnecessary; and though, on the principle of '*oderint dum metuant*', the Nazi leaders may profess public indifference, the German nation as a whole is deeply concerned at the universal dislike which the régime has brought upon it. Hitler could quite easily have achieved practically the same result by other and less offensive methods. Once Austria had become an integral part of Great Germany, the geographical weakness of the Czecho-Slovak State became more than ever apparent. She could at any moment have been economically strangled by a Germany who controlled practically all her outlets for external trade. Her complete political as well as economic subordination to the Reich was inescapable and was recognised as such by many of the Czechs themselves. The Czech head lay in the jaws of the German wolf, and existence would scarcely have been tolerable except on terms of the closest co-operation with a powerful neighbour which encircled the Czech provinces on three sides. An independent Bohemia and Moravia, bound by ties of mutual interest to Germany, might have been an additional strength to the latter. As a subjugated people, tough and indigestible, who at long last after many centuries have tasted for twenty years the sweets of real independence, they are more likely to be a source of perpetual weakness than of strength.

7. Moreover, though the success of the *coup* and particularly its execution without bloodshed appealed to the great majority of even moderate Germans and greatly enhanced Hitler's prestige on that account, there are many who do not hesitate to criticise it for what can be described—for lack of a better term—its faulty timing. There were other and more important questions which required prior settlement. In paragraph 20 of my despatch above mentioned I quoted Germany's immediate objectives as Memel, Danzig and the colonies, together with the complete subordination of Czecho-Slovakia politically and economically to Germany. The order in which these objectives were quoted was not haphazard. Memel and the Danzig-Corridor questions were the most immediate and certain. I regarded the colonies more as a kind of perpetual battle-cry for the Nazi régime, under cover of which the nation could be encouraged to support a continuation of its low standard of living, than as an issue requiring immediate settlement. The subordination of Czecho-Slovakia appeared to me a gradual policy which the Germans would methodically and relentlessly press with practical certainty of ultimate success.

8. Memel was the line of least resistance, and I accordingly placed it first. It was, in fact, hurriedly occupied by Germany a week after the Prague *coup*,

after agreement with the Lithuanian Government, which felt it wiser to make the best of a bad business. But, in point of fact, I am far from feeling certain that the settlement of Memel was not meant originally by Hitler to be included in a general bargain with Poland over Danzig and the other 'subjects of far wider scope' mysteriously alluded to by Colonel Beck in his speech on the 5th May.

9. Be that as it may, Memel itself was a minor consideration and the faulty timing of the Prague *coup* was in respect of Danzig and the Corridor. Of all the Versailles servitudes the Corridor was the one which was not only always most resented by all Germans, but was generally recognised from the beginning abroad as a not illegitimate grievance. The Pole is far more the traditional enemy of the German than ever the Czech was, and no war, if localised, would be more popular in Germany even today than one for the recovery of the Corridor. In many German eyes, therefore, Hitler made a great mistake in not dealing with Poland before antagonising the world over Prague.

10. Furthermore, the fate of the Czechs rendered the Poles still more alive to the dangers of their own position. The Sudeten concession had not saved the Czechs, and similarly any Danzig-Corridor concession might not save Posen and Upper Silesia. Whatever was actually the full extent of Hitler's proposals to Colonel Beck this winter at Berchtesgaden, the fact remains that in so far as they concerned Danzig and the Corridor they were rejected by the Polish Government on the 26th March. Hitler had been in too much of a hurry.

11. The Polish refusal in itself was probably the main origin of the crop of rumours in regard to an immediate attack by Germany on Danzig and the Corridor which led to the momentous departure from normal British policy in the shape of the British guarantee on the 31st March of Polish independence. This was followed in its turn by similar, though not reciprocal, guarantees to Greece and Roumania, by the negotiations for an anti-aggression pact with Soviet Russia, by the introduction of the British Compulsory Military Training Bill and the Anglo-Turkish Declaration of the 12th May. Such were some of the ripples caused by the stone which Hitler recklessly flung into the European pond on the 15th March, nor is the end of them in sight. Curiously enough I have the distinct impression that the ripple which caused not only the Italian Government, but the German Government, the greatest preoccupation is the Anglo-Turkish Agreement.

12. It is difficult to believe that Hitler would have taken the action which he did last March if he had foreseen the extent of its repercussions. There is, at least, no doubt that these evidences of British determination to resist by force any further German aggression have given him pause. His references to England in his speech to the Reichstag on the 28th April, in spite of the denunciation of the Anglo-German Naval Pact, were far milder than might have been expected and were clearly intended to disarm resentment. He possibly hoped to persuade people in England that Danzig was not worth fighting about. Personally, I am convinced that, apart from the wish being father to the thought, a good deal of the talk in Germany—dangerous though

it is—about England not being willing to fight for Danzig has been deliberately spread for propaganda purposes. Though, in so far as words can help, I leave no doubt in the minds of all Germans whom I meet that we would so fight, I doubt if Hitler himself needs to be convinced of the fact. It is far from improbable that his main concern today is lest the 'preventive' war, which has been his chief bugbear ever since he came to power in 1933, is after all going to be forced upon him before his work is finished and Germany is ready for it. If Germany was already fully prepared for it and Hitler was really convinced that England would not fight, she would surely before now have crossed the Corridor and occupied Danzig without waiting for the increased British preparedness for war which the next few months is likely to ensure.

13. Comment of this nature is, of course, pure hypothesis. Nevertheless, the more reliable indications are to the effect that Hitler considers it more prudent now to wait upon events. Whether the pause will be for two months or more depends probably more than anything else upon the development of the situation. Though people are apt to believe the contrary, my experience is that it is not Hitler himself but the extremist leaders of the party who take charge of developments. Their one criticism of Hitler is his inclination for procrastination, and they sometimes seek to force his hand by forcing the pace. Yet even if there is a pause, it may be taken for granted that this implies no change of heart, though it may involve a change of method, if the combination against him appears to Hitler too strong to permit for the time being of any immediate renewal of direct aggression. In the meantime and in reply to the steps being taken by His Majesty's Government, the Italo-German military alliance is being concluded in Berlin tomorrow, German pressure is being brought to bear on Hungary and Yugoslavia with a view to ensuring at least their neutrality, and counter-negotiations are probably being conducted with Stalin.

14. With every reserve in respect of the unforeseen incident, the position may well remain stationary during the summer months. Yet even that delay cannot be reckoned upon with any sort of confidence. The difficulties of Germany's economic situation, a *coup* arranged under the auspices of Himmler's men at Danzig, some especially provocative act on the part of Poland itself or of a definite understanding with Russia, possibly on the basis of sharing the spoils, may force Hitler's hand or encourage him to believe that the odds are in his favour. He will certainly be in a difficult position if, after the public announcement of his offer to Poland, he has to attend the Party Day at Nuremberg in September without having obtained any satisfaction.

15. As a German friend of mine, who has certainly no cause to be in any way pro-Nazi, said to me the other day: 'Hitler can put anything he likes across the German nation'. If Hitler thinks the risks are too great he will wait again till Nuremberg or as long as he must. But one thing is certain, and that is that he will not modify his plans, however much he may modify his tactics. He will now never rest so long as Danzig is not restored to Germany and direct German connexion between the Reich and East Prussia is not established. In

these respects he has the whole nation behind him. However unpleasant the **fact**, it has got to be clearly realised. No agreement with Poland which does **not** at least go far to satisfy these two requirements will be worth the paper **on** which it is written.

I have, &c.,

NEVILLE HENDERSON

CHAPTER VIII

The European situation, Anglo-Russian negotiations: the Danzig question. (May 21–26, 1939.)

No. 574

Sir A. Cadogan to United Kingdom Delegation (Geneva)
No. 6 Telegraphic [C 7449/15/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 21, 1939, 11.55 a.m.

Information has been received from a secret German source that Herr Schnurre¹ is leaving Berlin for Moscow tomorrow to negotiate very far-reaching commercial agreement with Soviet Government. Ground has already been prepared, and it is hoped that agreement may be completed this week.

I suggest it might be as well at least to show M. Maisky we have heard this rumour, if not also to ask him for information in regard to it, pointing out that a negotiation of this kind will almost certainly be misinterpreted in various quarters and might embarrass our negotiations with Soviet Government which, as he knows, we are most anxious to bring to a satisfactory conclusion.

It would be best if Herr Schnurre's mission could be delayed, but it may be late for that. And of course it may be specially designed to bring pressure on us in our negotiations.

Repeated to Moscow.²

¹ Herr Schnurre was a Special Commissioner for economic negotiations in the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

² In telegram No. 114 to Moscow of May 21, Sir W. Seeds was instructed to speak on similar lines to the Soviet Government.

No. 575

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Sir A. Cadogan
(Received May 21, 7.10 p.m.)
No. 170 Telegraphic [C 7444/54/18]

WARSAW, May 21, 1939, 2.6 p.m.

Having heard there had been an incident at Danzig last night I asked the Ministry for Foreign Affairs for their version. They informed me that a crowd of some two hundred foreigners, some of whom were in Nazi uniform, attacked Polish Customs House at Kalthof on East Prussian border and threatened Polish Customs officials there, who were however able to escape.

He added that Customs station had been completely demolished and that it was now impossible to control in any way what might pass from East Prussia into Danzig.

2. Polish Commissioner-General sent a representative to the spot to make an investigation in a Polish car, which, on arrival there, was attacked by persons who fired from another car. Polish chauffeur in defending himself shot one of the assailants dead.

3. I asked representative of Ministry what action the Polish Government intended to take, warning him of danger of doing anything hasty. He said that this was fully appreciated, but in view of the fact that a short time before a Polish station-master had been attacked in Danzig territory, it was felt that an energetic protest should be made to the Senate and that reparations should be demanded. He did not think the incident, though it was undoubtedly serious, should lead to grave complications.

Repeated to Geneva, Berlin and Danzig.

No. 576

United Kingdom Delegation (Geneva) to Sir A. Cadogan
(Received May 22, 9.45 a.m.)

No. 8 L.N. Telegraphic [C 7551/3356/18]

GENEVA, May 21, 1939, 6.20 p.m.

Following is an account of my¹ conversation with the French Ministers at Paris yesterday about our Russian conversations.

2. I told them that in view of the unsuccessful result of our recent soundings of M. Maisky (which I gave them some account of) there seemed to us to be two possible alternatives.

(1) A straight triple pact providing for mutual assistance in the event either of direct attack upon any of the parties or in the event of one of them becoming engaged in hostilities through giving assistance to some other Power:

(2) An arrangement in the shape of a formal pact by which the three parties would agree to act together should one of them become engaged in hostilities on behalf of some other Power that was the victim of aggression.

3. I explained to them that His Majesty's Government would see great difficulty in agreeing to a straight triple alliance. Our main objections apart from those which we had repeatedly emphasised were, first, that such a pact might well provoke Germany to violent action which we all wished to avoid and secondly that it might divide opinion in Great Britain which was at present firmly united behind the policy which His Majesty's Government had been pursuing during the recent months.

4. We had however set down on paper outline of a direct triple pact in order to see what it looked like. I then read to the French Ministers the draft (known as draft B) contained in paragraph 4 of my telegram No. 165 to

¹ i.e. Lord Halifax.

Warsaw.² I emphasised that I thought it unlikely that His Majesty's Government would be able to accept such a draft.

5. M. Daladier said that the draft seemed to him quite acceptable and he could not understand our difficulties. Unless we concluded such an agreement quickly we should increase rather than diminish the risk of an act of force by Germany. Such an act could only be averted if Germany could be convinced that if she embarked upon this course she would meet with effective resistance. Without the collaboration of Russia assistance could not be effective. He did not believe that conclusion of such a pact would provoke Germany to violent action. Quite apart from the benefits he did not think that Russia ought to be treated on a basis less favourable than Poland. We had entered into direct reciprocal undertaking with Poland and the Soviet Union would have cause to complain if we did not do the same with her. He did not think that the Soviet Government would accept anything less than this now although they might have accepted less a few weeks ago when the French formula had been drafted.

6. M. Daladier added that an attack by Germany on Russia which did not bring our Polish and Roumanian guarantees into play was most unlikely to occur. We should in fact not be increasing our obligations much by accepting triple pact. I replied that if as he himself had pointed out what Russians feared was attack by Germany with Polish or Roumanian connivance or acquiescence we should in fact be undertaking a heavier obligation since unless Poland and Roumania resisted, our guarantee to them would not come into force. To this he replied by saying that in such a case France would be involved by Franco-Soviet Pact and if this was so it would surely be impossible for us to stand aside.

7. I then turned to the second alternative and said that on the journey we had prepared alternative draft which was based generally on French proposal of May 3 but cast in the shape of a formal pact.

8. I then read draft (known as draft E) text of which is contained in my immediately following telegram.³

M. Bonnet observed that this formula would include the Baltic States and small States in the west provided that they asked for assistance and I agreed that this was so.

9. M. Daladier appeared rather to like this draft and thought it represented an advance upon our previous ideas but he did not think the Soviet Government would accept it now. He thought that their attitude had stiffened since M. Litvinov's departure and that they were now on their dignity and would accept nothing less than complete equality and reciprocity.

10. I had it in mind to ask French Ministers to submit this formula to Soviet Government as an idea of their own but as M. Daladier said that if he did this he would probably have to touch it up somewhat I thought it wiser not to authorise him to act and we agreed that the next step would be for M. Bonnet and myself to explore the situation further with M. Maisky at Geneva.

² No. 556.

³ No. 578.

11. I asked French Ministers whether they thought there was a danger of the Soviet Government saying at any moment that in view of the delay in accepting their ideas they could not discuss the matter further and would drop the whole thing. M. Daladier thought that this was a serious danger. M. Litvinov's departure certainly meant something and it might well be that Soviet Government would think it the best policy to retire into isolation and let Europe destroy itself if it would.

12. I asked the French Ministers whether they thought that there was serious danger of an accommodation between Germany and Russia if we failed to close with the Russians now. They replied that this danger could not be ignored since there was a party in Germany which was in favour of such a *rapprochement*. Russian policy was quite incalculable and was liable to sudden changes. It was impossible to follow the workings of the Soviet mind from day to day.

13. Since drafting the above I learn that Suritz⁴ has expressed the view that M. Maisky would be able to come some way to meet us and that he (Suritz) anticipated that we should be able to reach agreement without undue difficulty. I am doubtful of this but I am seeing M. Maisky this morning and will telegraph again after doing so.

Repeated to Moscow and Paris.

⁴ Soviet Ambassador in Paris.

No. 577

Mr. Shepherd (Danzig) to Sir A. Cadogan

(Received May 22, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 42 Telegraphic [C 7448/54/18]

DANZIG, May 21, 1939, 7.0 p.m.

Following renewed anti-Polish demonstrations against Polish Custom House Inspectors at Kalthof within Danzig territory opposite Marienburg, a German resident of the village was shot and killed early this morning by chauffeur of motor car in which three leading Polish officials, including Deputy Polish Commissioner-General, went to investigate demonstrations.

2. There are wide discrepancies between official Danzig and Polish versions of the incident and several important contradictions in Danzig version which insists that any shooting was entirely unprovoked and that victim was shot from behind whereas Poles insist that it was in self-defence whilst Polish officials were absent from the car and their chauffeur considered himself threatened by three occupants of another car.

3. Formal protests have been made by both sides.

Repeated to Berlin and Warsaw.

No. 578

United Kingdom Delegation (Geneva) to Sir A. Cadogan

(Received May 22, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 9 L.N. Telegraphic [C 7551/3356/18]

GENEVA, May 21, 1939, 9.25 p.m.

Following is text referred to in my immediately preceding telegram.¹

Draft E.

It being the common desire of the Governments of the United Kingdom, France and Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to act together in giving assistance to other European States which desire such assistance in resisting acts of aggression by a European Power involving a clear threat to their independence the said Governments have agreed as follows:

1. Should any one of the Governments of the United Kingdom, France or the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics find itself involved in hostilities in consequence of its having come to the assistance of another European country which has been the object of aggression by a European Power involving clear threat to its independence and has requested assistance of that Government the other two Governments will immediately give to that Government all the support and assistance in their power.

2. The three Governments will concert together as to methods by which such mutual support and assistance could in case of need be made most effective.

3. It is understood that the rendering of support and assistance in the above cases is without prejudice to the rights and position of other Powers.

Repeated to Moscow and Paris.

¹ No. 576.

No. 579

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Sir A. Cadogan

(Received May 22, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 171 Telegraphic [C 7445/54/18]

WARSAW, May 21, 1939, 10.30 p.m.

My telegram No. 170.¹

M. Beck's Chef de Cabinet has given me the following further details. The Polish chauffeur who shot one of his assailants succeeded in escaping into Polish territory. The Danzig authorities have arrested Polish staff at Kalthof railway station, presumably in connexion with investigation, but Polish Government are replacing them and are also sending customs officials back to Kalthof.

2. Polish Commissioner-General has protested energetically to the Senate

¹ No. 575.

and has demanded guarantees for the future security of Polish officials in Danzig territory.

3. Chef de Cabinet expresses the opinion that the incident may be a German manoeuvre to ascertain how far the Polish Government will react, or may be the prelude to a series of such incidents which would be even more serious. He says that the Polish Government are fully alive to the danger of being drawn into precipitate or drastic action. They are also taking steps to control the press here and avoid exciting public opinion.

Repeated to Berlin, Geneva and Danzig.

No. 580

*Record of Conversation between the Secretary of State and the High Commissioner for Danzig at the Hotel Carlton Parc, Geneva, on May 21, 1939
(Received in Foreign Office May 23)*

[C 7514/54/18]

After some preliminary conversation about Professor Burckhardt's experiences in Danzig and his earlier journeys to Warsaw and Berlin, Lord Halifax asked whether Professor Burckhardt thought that it would be possible for him to help to bring the Polish and German Governments to the point of negotiation. Negotiations were clearly not possible at the moment, but it might be useful to think out now some of the lines on which they might be possible in the future if a *détente* could be established.

Professor Burckhardt agreed that the present moment was not propitious. The Poles would have to become a little less stiff, and the Germans would have to come back a little from the position they had recently taken up. It was clearly impossible to touch the Constitution at present, since this would raise the whole juridical question. If he returned to Danzig, it would be for the purpose of rendering general service, if possible, in the interests of a *détente*.

He had not thought that it would be wise for him to resign, since he thought it likely that the Germans and Poles might want someone to help them. In December 1938, when matters were further advanced than they were at present, it was clear that both Poles and Germans were in need of some neutral person, as when they met face to face friction was almost inevitable.

He thought that a further attempt should be made and that, although the League was antipathetic to the Germans and had suffered in the eyes of the Poles, the High Commissioner should be at the disposal of both parties to render service if he could. It was, however, important to be cautious about intervening in the internal question of Danzig. There was, as a matter of fact, not much of the Constitution left.

Lord Halifax said that if the High Commissioner returned to Danzig, he would return with the object of acting as a buffer between the Germans and Poles, rather than as the representative of a Constitution sponsored by the League, which was already a thing of the past.

He thought this was clearly right from the broad point of view. He hoped that, in spite of whatever personal difficulties there might be, the High Commissioner would not give up his efforts to do what only he was in a position to do to help to avoid a head-on collision. It was desirable that he should, with the goodwill of both Warsaw and Berlin, return to Danzig and try to help towards a *détente*.

Professor Burckhardt thought there was still something he could do in a personal way to smooth over internal difficulties in Danzig. But he would have to overlook a good many more things than he had overlooked in 1938.

Lord Halifax asked what, assuming that a *détente* could be established, Professor Burckhardt thought would be a possible line on which the Danzig question could be adjusted. He had been struck by the phrase in Herr Hitler's speech about a free city within the Reich. Did Professor Burckhardt know what this meant?

Professor Burckhardt said that Herr Hitler had been reading a good deal of history recently and was obsessed by the idea of the Holy Roman Empire. He was thinking, perhaps, of the status of Hamburg in earlier days, or of the status of Bohemia at present. It would be difficult to know what the limits of this conception were. Marseilles and Geneva itself had at one time formed part of the Holy Roman Empire. He thought that to give any such status to Danzig would be a dangerous precedent. If, on the other hand, Danzig could be neutralised in the same kind of way as Luxemburg it might be a happy solution; but a free city within the Reich would represent a new form of imperialism.

Lord Halifax asked what Professor Burckhardt thought would be M. Beck's requirements in any settlement.

Professor Burckhardt thought that the important thing for Poland was that Danzig should not become German; that there should be no fortification, no German troops in Danzig and that the German fleet should not have the right to enter the port. Gdynia and Danzig were really one town and were only about five minutes distant by car.¹ M. Beck might perhaps go so far as to abandon the representation by Poland of Danzig's foreign relations and admit that there should be a diplomatic representative of the Free City at Berlin and at Warsaw.

Herr Hitler's proposal was quite different. He proposed to take back Danzig into the Reich, giving it the mere name of a Free City, but allowing Poland complete economic rights.

Lord Halifax asked whether on the assumption that Hitler did not want war and that his face must be saved, there would be any value in the following idea: The Poles would allow the Germans to run the internal administrations of Danzig on German lines (Professor Burckhardt thought this was already in practice the case). Germany could conduct Danzig's foreign

¹ Danzig is 8 miles from Gdynia.

relations. Danzig would be represented in the German Reichstag. In exchange, Germany would undertake to maintain the character of the Free City and would be debarred from fortifying it or occupying it with her troops or sending her ships of war into the harbour. The whole of this settlement to be guaranteed internationally.

Professor Burckhardt thought that if Danzig remained effectively demilitarised, as Lord Halifax suggested, this ought to give the Poles all that they really needed, provided that goodwill existed between the Polish and German Governments. Danzig representation in the Reichstag would be a difficult matter for Polish public opinion, which contained strong chauvinist elements.

Such a solution might save Hitler's face; but the essential point for Hitler would be that a settlement should be bilateral in form and should have the appearance of arising from the spontaneous desire of the two Governments concerned and not at the inspiration or under the protection of the Western Powers.

He thought that he could certainly broach something on these lines at Warsaw. He would hope that M. Beck would keep the door open and authorise him to speak usefully in Berlin. In any event, he would at Berlin maintain the position he had always taken up, namely, that the Committee of Three would be favourable to any direct arrangement reached between Germany and Poland.

Lord Halifax agreed that it would be well if, on the surface at least, a solution could be a German-Polish one. Great Britain and France should keep out. Professor Burckhardt was in a good position to work for a drawing together of the two parties.

He wondered whether it would be wise for the High Commissioner to come to London after his visits to Warsaw and Berlin. It would probably be wiser for us to send someone out to meet him at Geneva after his return.

Professor Burckhardt agreed. He had a function to attend in Switzerland between the 7th and 9th June. His visits to Warsaw and Berlin could be over by then and he could be available in Geneva on the 10th June. He welcomed Lord Halifax's suggestion that Mr. Makins might perhaps come out to meet him.

Lord Halifax said that he might sum up the position as follows: the High Commissioner's visits to Warsaw and Berlin might be directed towards two ends:—

- (1) To try to get both Berlin and Warsaw to look with favour upon his return to Danzig.
- (2) If possible, to ascertain the views of Warsaw and Berlin as to the lines of a compromise that might be reached once tempers had cooled.

Lord Halifax thought it was important that the High Commissioner should, if possible, return to Danzig, however embarrassing this might be for

himself and the League. Something more important than the prestige of the League was at stake.

Lord Halifax asked if the High Commissioner thought that the question of the motor-road would be a point of great difficulty.

Professor Burckhardt thought that it would be impossible for Poland to agree to an extra-territorial road cutting across her territory. It would, however, be to the advantage of both Poland and Germany that the road should be built. The stretch of it in Polish territory would only be about 80 kilometres.

After a good deal of reflection, he had come to the conclusion that the only solution for the Corridor question was for Germany to take a decision to accept it permanently as the price which she would pay for the advantage which she had gained through the creation of Poland. Poland stood as a buffer between Germany and Russia, and there was now no common German-Russian frontier.

Discussion then turned to the question of the meeting of the Committee of Three. It was agreed that it would be better, if possible, that the Committee should issue no communiqué, though it was recognised that it might be difficult to avoid this. It was agreed that in any event the receipt of the invitation to visit Warsaw could not be kept secret and would probably have to go into the communiqué. Professor Burckhardt was anxious that the German Government should be informed of the invitation before it was made public. He proposed, after consulting the Secretary-General, to find means to let the German Consul know that the invitation had been received, so that the German Government could be informed.

At one stage in the conversation Professor Burckhardt referred to the exaggerated stories about events in Danzig which were habitually published by Havas Agency. M. Komarnicki² had told him that he thought Havas were responsible for about 40 per cent. of the trouble in this respect. It was agreed that something should be said to M. Bonnet about this in the hope that he might say a word to Havas.

² Polish Minister at Berne.

No. 581

*United Kingdom Delegation (Geneva) to Sir A. Cadogan
(Received May 22, 2.45 p.m.)*

No. 10 Telegraphic [C 7522/3356/18]

GENEVA, May 22, 1939, 12.55 p.m.

My telegram No. 8.¹

I had conversation with M. Maisky this morning at which I set myself to obtain as clear a statement as possible of his Government's views. He responded freely but emphasised that although he could assure me that his

¹ No. 576.

observations were in accordance with general lines of his Government's views they must be regarded as personal explanations.

2. I asked him why Soviet Government had been unable to accept proposals suggested to them in outline by the Embassy.

3. He replied that essential thing was to prevent war. Soviet Government thought this could be done but only by organising such a combination of forces that Germany would not dare to attack. This is the purpose . . .² a triple pact was necessary and our proposals entirely ignored this element in Soviet proposal.

4. In the second place our proposals were not based on the French Government's . . .² under them Russia would be bound to assist Great Britain and France in the event of attack on Poland or Roumania but Great Britain would not be obliged to come to Russia's assistance in the event of an attack on Baltic States.

5. The weakness of our plan was that it was based on guarantee to Poland and Roumania alone. Supposing that Roumania should make friends with Germany or that Germany should by intimidation or bribery bring Roumania to allow German troops to pass freely across Roumania to attack Russia, Great Britain would not be obliged to intervene, though Russia would be forced to fight. He agreed with my reminder that under Franco-Soviet Pact France might have to help Russia but observed that this was not true of Great Britain.

6. So also if Poland's policy changed the same thing might happen in Poland. Baltic States too wished to be neutral at present but they might equally be intimidated or bribed into allowing German troops to pass through or German aerodromes to be established in their territory.

7. Then again Russia was being asked to give Poland guarantee but Poland was not being asked to give Russia guarantee. Poland might therefore be neutral in a German-Russian war and the character of her neutrality would be of importance to Russia.

8. I repeated to him our reasons for thinking that our proposals whatever might be said about them were fully reciprocal.

9. He admitted that from logical or legalistic point of view this might be so but in practice the position of the two countries would be quite different, Great Britain had a reciprocal agreement with Poland while Russia had none. France had a reciprocal arrangement with Great Britain while Russia had none. Russia was therefore exposed to far greater dangers than was Great Britain and might be left to fight alone.

10. I told him that if Russia was in a situation of inequality this was inherent in her Treaty position. If we were not proposing any direct guarantee for Russia neither were we asking any direct Russian guarantee for ourselves. Indeed her position was made better not worse than it was before by the fact of our having guaranteed Poland and Roumania which were the only countries through which an effective German attack could be launched on Russia.

² The text is here uncertain.

11. I then suggested that it would go some way to meet the Russian case if it was possible to introduce provision by which border states would undertake not to allow Germany to use their territory as a passage or base of operations against Russia. He doubted whether they would be willing to make such an arrangement or that they would be able to observe it if they made it.

12. M. Maisky explained that Russia had the choice of two positions. She could on the one hand take care of herself and enter into no obligations to other Powers. Advantage of this would be that though she might have to defend herself single-handed she would preserve her own liberty of action.

13. On the other hand though she could in the long run win any war of defence single-handed she could not prevent war in general. She was therefore ready to collaborate with other Powers for this purpose and though she would thereby lose her freedom of action she would gain in return possibility of preventing war. If she accepted British proposals she would lose her liberty of action without getting this result in return. She would moreover be undertaking heavy obligations since owing to her geographical position she would have to bear the chief brunt of assisting Powers which she had guaranteed. It was for this reason that Soviet Government thought principle of pact of mutual assistance to be essential. If, for example, Yugoslavia were, like Hungary, to join the Axis Bulgaria would also do so and position of Roumania would be made impossible and the door into Russia would be open.

14. I asked him how far it would meet Soviet view if we could cover Baltic States by our proposal. He replied that this would be an improvement but it would not secure the main aim which was to prevent war in general.

(Continuation to follow)³

³ No. 582.

No. 582

United Kingdom Delegation (Geneva) to Sir A. Cadogan

(Received May 22, 2.45 p.m.)

No. 10 Telegraphic [C 7522/3356/18]

GENEVA, May 22, 1939, 12.55 p.m.

Part 2.

15. He added that if the triple pact could be arranged smaller (? nations)¹ would no longer be shy about receiving Soviet assistance. Their hesitation arose from the fact that they saw strong and well-organized aggressor block faced by ill-organized and slow moving block. I told him I thought he very much under-estimated the difficulties in this respect and that their hesitation arose from quite other reasons.

16. Having in mind draft E (my telegram No. 9²) I asked whether it would help to meet Soviet view if it could be provided that with one of the

¹ The text is here uncertain.

² No. 578.

three Powers becoming involved in hostilities through helping any other Power that requested their assistance e.g. Baltic States, Yugoslavia, Belgium, Holland as well as Poland and Roumania, then all three would be in the war together.

17. He did not think that this would do as it did not cover the case of a sudden collapse of states bordering on Russia or of their failure to resist.

18. I told him that speaking frankly I was greatly disappointed with the attitude of the Soviet Government throughout these negotiations. We had made very great effort to meet their point of view whereas they had not changed their position at all and had made little or no advance to meet us.

19. He observed that on the contrary whereas they had put forward eight points in their original proposal (Moscow telegram No. 69³) they had reduced these to three and set aside the other five (Moscow telegram No. 93⁴). Soviet Government might be able to compromise on secondary points but they could not compromise on essentials. Triple pact was indispensable as a deterrent.

20. I then developed argument based on anxiety lest effect in Germany of conclusions of a triple pact might be the very opposite of what we hoped. To this he said Herr Hitler was not a fool and would never enter upon a war which he was bound to lose. Even the present negotiations had made him proceed with caution since he was not sure what would come out of them. The only thing he understood was force. Soviet Government had had somewhat similar experience with Japanese who interpreted an appeal to reason as a sign of weakness.

21. I asked whether I correctly interpreted his point of view as follows: Soviet Government thought the triple pact of mutual assistance necessary first because by this means alone could Russia be protected against collapse or intimidation by Germany by [*sic* ? of] buffer states and secondly, because the Soviet Government felt that if they were to accept new and heavy obligations they could only do so as part of a system that in their view gave the best hope of preventing war.

22. He agreed with this statement of his Government's position. Soviet Government were anxious that there should be no outbreak of war anywhere.

23. Having in mind draft set out in paragraph 4 of my telegram No. 165 to Warsaw⁵ (draft B) I asked him whether I should be right in stating views of Soviets somewhat as follows:—In the event of any of the three Governments being involved in hostilities with a European Power either as a result of it giving help to another European state which was the victim of aggression or as the result of a direct attack on one of them the other two would come to the assistance of that Government.

24. M. Maisky thought this was in keeping with the ideas of Soviet Government.

25. I asked him whether it would be the intention of the Soviet Government to make operation of such a pact ancillary upon victim of aggression asking for assistance. He agreed that assistance could not be forced on those who did not desire it.

³ No. 201.

⁴ No. 520.

⁵ No. 556.

26. I finally asked him whether he thought the Soviet Government would be willing that such an agreement as they were pressing for should cover not only Eastern European states (as in Soviet proposal) but also smaller Western European states. He replied that he could not answer this question with authority but did not see any insuperable difficulty and was sure that it could be discussed.

27. I am afraid I was unable in the course of the long conversation to shake M. Maisky at all on his main points of insistence on a triple mutual guarantee against direct aggression as against only joint action in support of guarantees given to other states and I think the choice before us is disagreeably plain, i.e. breakdown of negotiations or agreement on lines of paragraph 4, telegram No. 165 to Warsaw (draft B).

28. I thanked M. Maisky for the information he had given me but told him I could give him no indication of the attitude of His Majesty's Government which would be decided however in the light of all considerations of which they had to take account.

Repeated to Moscow and Paris.

No. 583

Sir W. Seeds (Moscow) to Sir A. Cadogan

(Received May 22, 1.25 p.m.)

No. 99 Telegraphic [C 7454/15/18]

MOSCOW, May 22, 1939, 1.36 p.m.

Your telegram No. 114.¹

M. Potemkin told me this morning that there is no truth in the report and that there could be no question of Herr Schnurre being about to start on German initiative as no request for a visa had been received. Soviet Chargé d'Affaires Berlin had reported that Germans were busy spreading rumours of that kind.

Repeated to Geneva.

¹ Not printed. See No. 574, note 2.

No. 584

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Sir A. Cadogan

(Received May 22, 9.30 p.m.)

No. 172 Telegraphic [C 7517/54/18]

WARSAW, May 22, 1939, 6.0 p.m.

Your telegram No. 21 Saving.¹

Your summing up of position as regards maintenance of contact seems to call for no comment. In order to make sure that position was fully understood by Minister for Foreign Affairs I took opportunity of a visit from his Chef de Cabinet who is in his confidence as much as anyone to submit the

¹ No. 558.

three points of your telegram to him. He agreed that as far as he knew this accurately represented the position.

2. I do not think that we can very well ask M. Beck for more assurances and I consider that he is fully acting up to those he has given us. For instance in connexion with Kalthof incident (see my telegram No. 171²) M. Beck's Chef de Cabinet came specially to see me yesterday evening in order to give me the latest information and inform me of steps Polish Government were taking. He fully realised necessity of controlling public opinion here and the press this morning, while indignant, is not violent.

3. M. Beck's Chef de Cabinet has just informed me situation is easier this morning. Polish Government do not believe that Nazis intend to follow up recent precipitancy by further provocation for the moment. Danzig Senate have apparently given assurances that Polish Customs office[?]s may resume normal functions.

4. I feel bound however to stress the danger of each fresh incident increasing the ill-feeling on both sides and bringing the breaking point nearer.

5. I fully realise the difficulty of His Majesty's Government or any other Government making any mediatory proposals but I have always felt that most practical solution for this state of uneasy peace would be that both German and Polish Governments should declare that present moment is not opportune for seeking a radical solution of Danzig question and that therefore it has been decided that *status quo* should be maintained there until present period of tension has passed. Meanwhile both sides should declare that they have no intention of being dragged into hostilities by local incidents.

6. I will of course continue to exert every effort to ensure that Polish Government do not take any precipitate action and I think that they are now fully alive to danger of in any way falling into a German trap designed to put them in the wrong with public opinion of the world.

Repeated to Geneva, Berlin and Danzig.

² No. 579.

No. 585

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Sir A. Cadogan

(Received May 22, 8.0 p.m.)

No. 378 Telegraphic: by telephone [C 7461/54/18]

BERLIN, May 22, 1939

Warsaw telegrams Nos. 170¹ and 171.²

German version of Kalthof incident is in complete variance with Polish.

'Deutsches Nachrichten Büro' states that a small harmless demonstration against Polish Customs officials had dispersed before Polish official car arrived. Polish Customs officials were unpopular on account of their provocative attitude and insulting behaviour to German girls and women. Polish car is stated to have found Customs House in complete quiet. The victim

¹ No. 575.

² No. 579.

Grübner was said to be returning from Marienburg in a taxi and was dazzled by the lights of the stationary Polish car outside Kalthof railway station. He got out with a companion to investigate whether car wanted help. Before reaching the car they realised nothing was needed and turned round whereupon two shots were fired from the Polish car and Grübner was hit in the back of the neck. The assailant fled into the station, no words having been exchanged between the two parties. The occupants of the Polish car also fled to Polish territory by rail.

Repeated to Warsaw, Paris and Moscow.

No. 586

*Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Sir A. Cadogan
(Received May 23, 9.30 a.m.)*

No. 173 Telegraphic [C 7524/3356/18]

WARSAW, May 22, 1939, 11.26 p.m.

Your telegram No. 165.¹

M. Beck has requested me to express to you his appreciation of the manner in which Polish susceptibilities have been borne in mind in the formula now suggested. He had only one modification to propose, namely, that in the wording of paragraph 4 (b) the order of the two contingencies should be inverted so that the case of aggression by a European Power against England or France should precede the case of aggression by that Power against another European State which has requested British or French assistance. He felt that the present wording of the paragraph placed too much emphasis on the possibility of Poland requesting assistance from the Soviet Union. He pointed out that this was purely a minor modification and trusted that it would not in any way be considered a radical alteration of the formula.

2. He wished however to make certain further general observations on the question of the negotiations with the Soviet Government. He felt that in consideration of a possible understanding with Russia it was sometimes forgotten that conditions were different from what they had been in 1914 as there was no longer a common frontier between Germany and Russia. Further he pointed out that whereas Poland's alliance with France provided for the case of aggression against Poland by either Germany or Russia, the proposed British guarantee to Poland (see your telegram No. 79²) only covered aggression by Germany. In theory moreover the present British formula—see paragraph 4 (a) of your telegram—could be construed as an alliance against Poland in the event of that country attacking Russia. It was of course unthinkable that Poland should ever have any aggressive designs against Russia but he suggested that, while the only modification which he wished to propose was that suggested in paragraph 1 above, nevertheless in

¹ No. 556.

² Not printed. See No. 24, note 2.

any conversation with the Soviet Government it should be made clear that of course any alliance could under no circumstances be directed against Poland.

Repeated to Geneva and Moscow.

No. 587

*United Kingdom Delegation (Geneva) to Sir A. Cadogan
(Received May 24)*

Unnumbered Telegraphic [C 7555/54/18]

GENEVA, May 22, 1939

Following from Secretary of State:

I saw M. Komarnicki—the Polish Minister at Berne—this evening and we had a short conversation about Danzig.

M. Komarnicki said that he had been in communication with Warsaw and he understood that the view taken there was that the incident reported today was local, and not likely to lead to wider trouble. There might well be others, but the Polish Government did not think that the German Government would push things to dangerous extremities, provided that the Poles made clear, as they certainly would, their determination to maintain their rights. They had no intention of allowing Danzig to be treated 'like the leaves of an artichoke'.

They judged the German Government to be somewhat perplexed as to what to do next; and the Polish Government itself could be relied on not to do anything imprudent. It was, therefore, to be hoped that the temperature might drop—and some approach made to negotiation, which was not possible at the moment. I said that I thought if there was to be a pause of some weeks before we must expect further action on the part of Germany, it was of the first importance that we should all make the best use of the time to make any advance we could towards conversations and, let us hope, settlement.

M. Komarnicki spoke about the invitation of the Polish Government to M. Burckhardt to visit Warsaw, and I told him that I was inclined to think the best presentation of his visit would be that he should be announced as going to Warsaw on his way to Danzig. Thereafter he might pay a brief visit to Berlin.

M. Komarnicki appeared to think this was all right, and possibly even useful, provided that M. Burckhardt went to Berlin in his private capacity and not as High Commissioner of Danzig.

I said that the Committee of Three would be considering the whole matter tomorrow, after which it would no doubt be possible to inform him of the decisions reached.

Repeated by Foreign Office to Warsaw and Berlin.

United Kingdom Delegation (Geneva) to Sir A. Cadogan
(Received May 23)

No. 15 Saving: Telegraphic [C 7550/842/55]

Following from Secretary of State.

GENEVA, May 22, 1939

My despatch No. 25.¹

1. French Foreign Minister reverted this morning to the question of the proposed Franco-Polish Protocol interpreting the treaties between the two countries.

2. He said that the Polish Ambassador had some time ago pointed out that in their declaration about Poland, His Majesty's Government had undertaken obligations which went in some respects beyond those undertaken by France to Poland in existing treaties. For one thing, the Anglo-Polish arrangement, unlike those between France and Poland, was not linked up with the procedure under the League Covenant. The Polish Government therefore thought it desirable that the necessary adjustments should be made in the Franco-Polish treaties in order that the respective arrangements of France and Great Britain should be harmonised.

3. M. Bonnet said that he had agreed to this, since he thought that His Majesty's Government and the Polish Government would have already reached agreement as to the terms of their formal treaty. The Polish Government thereupon submitted a draft protocol. At a later stage the Polish Ambassador submitted the text of a Supplementary declaration in which the Polish Government stated that Danzig was a vital interest for Poland and in which the French Foreign Minister would take note of this statement.

4. M. Bonnet had hesitated to commit himself to this new proposal, and had now learned that His Majesty's Government and the Polish Government had not yet settled the terms of their formal agreement.

5. He said that the French Government thought it essential that the obligations undertaken towards Poland by France and Great Britain should be defined with precision and in similar terms. He recognised the force of my observation that Poland might certainly be expected to be prudent, since she would suffer first and most severely in case of war. But this did not dispense us from looking closely at the terms of any obligations which we might assume. Public opinion might at the present moment be hopeful that by undertaking obligations His Majesty's Government and the French Government would avert war; but public opinion was fickle, and if the time should come for those obligations to be fulfilled the public might wonder why the terms had not been more carefully scrutinised before obligation was assumed. In particular, M. Bonnet thought that Poland ought to consult His Majesty's Government and the French Government before taking irrevocable action.

This despatch (not printed) enclosed the record of that part of Lord Halifax's conversation with MM. Daladier and Bonnet on May 20 dealing with Poland and Danzig, printed as No. 569.

6. I told him I thought that we had to steer our course between the danger, on the one hand, of leaving the decision in the hands of Poland alone, and on the other of giving the impression in Germany that we should be lacking in resolution in our support of Poland in case of need.

7. M. Bonnet asked whether it would be necessary to publish any agreement we reached with Poland. I replied that in our own case publication would be necessary. He suggested that the best plan might be to conclude a treaty which would be published, and to append to it any necessary interpretative clauses which would not need to be published. I said that this might be a possible course.

8. I repeated to him that we had not yet started negotiations with the Polish Government for the conclusion of our formal treaty, though we had settled with them certain general principles. We had thought it better to wait until the Russian conversations had reached a conclusion.

9. M. Bonnet said that in that case it would be better if he did not sign anything with the Polish Government for the present. It was well to remember that any obligation entered into by either Great Britain or France towards Poland would in practice bind the other country. It was desirable therefore that Great Britain and France should proceed in step.

10. I told him that we would proceed with our Polish Treaty as soon as possible. When we had cleared our minds on the subject we would consult the French Government, so that the two Governments might proceed on the same lines.

11. Meanwhile, it was agreed that the two Delegations at Geneva should exchange ideas in a preliminary way.

Repeated to Paris and Warsaw.

No. 589

Foreign Office Memorandum on the Anglo-Soviet negotiations

[C 7591/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 22, 1939*

In accordance with the decision taken at the meeting of the Foreign Policy Committee on the 16th May, the Soviet Ambassador was interviewed on the morning of the following day.¹ His Excellency was told that if he could get

¹ No record of this interview has been traced in the Foreign Office archives. On May 19, however, Viscount Halifax informed his Cabinet colleagues that a meeting between Sir R. Vansittart and M. Maisky had taken place on the evening of May 17. At that meeting Sir R. Vansittart had explained that he was acting in a personal and not in an official capacity, and that he wanted, before submitting certain proposals (see No. 527, note 1) to the Secretary of State, to find out from M. Maisky whether those proposals would be acceptable in Moscow. If M. Maisky could give him an affirmative answer, he had some reason to believe that the Secretary of State would consider them favourably.

During the conversation Sir R. Vansittart again said that it was important to avoid further delay in concluding the negotiations: he pointed out the delays and complications which would result from an attempt to cover too much ground at the outset, and the

an indication from his Government that they would be prepared to accept it, His Majesty's Government might propose a settlement on the lines approved by the Foreign Policy Committee. M. Maisky undertook to refer to his Government by telegraph.

2. On the morning of the 19th May, M. Maisky indicated that his Government would not be disposed to reach agreement on those lines and that they maintained their proposals, the chief amongst which was (in the words of telegram No. 93 from Moscow²) 'the conclusion between Great Britain, France and the U.S.S.R. of an effective pact of mutual assistance against aggression'. Without this the Soviet Government claimed that the proposals of His Majesty's Government 'do not contain the principle of reciprocity with regard to the U.S.S.R. and place the latter in a position of inequality, inasmuch as they do not contemplate an obligation by Great Britain and France to guarantee the U.S.S.R. in the event of a direct attack on the latter by aggressors, whereas Great Britain and France, as well as Poland, enjoy such a guarantee as a result of the reciprocity which exists between them'.

3. It is possible to argue that the proposals made by His Majesty's Government are strictly of a reciprocal nature. It is true that His Majesty's Government do not offer the Soviet Government an undertaking of assistance in the event of a direct attack upon the Soviet Union. But nor, on the other hand, do His Majesty's Government ask the Soviet Government for an undertaking of assistance in the event of a direct attack upon the United Kingdom. Then, again, it is true that His Majesty's Government have not undertaken to extend their guarantee to Finland, Estonia and Latvia. But nor, for their part, do His Majesty's Government ask the Soviet Government to extend their guarantee, for example, to Belgium and Holland. Indeed, His Majesty's Government are asking the Soviet Government to do something less than they are undertaking to do themselves, so that if there is any lack of reciprocity, the disadvantage would seem to lie with His Majesty's Government rather than with the Soviet Government.

4. The real ground of objection which the Soviet Government appear to desirability of limiting the arrangements, in the first place to Poland and Roumania, and of leaving for future discussion the question of their possible extension to other countries.

M. Maisky's view of the proposals had not been too unfriendly; he had promised to submit them to Moscow at once. The Secretary of State had learned that M. Corbin had done his best to persuade M. Maisky to commend the proposals to the favourable consideration of his Government. M. Maisky had that morning informed the Secretary of State that the proposals were not acceptable to the Soviet Government, and that the only basis on which the Soviet Government were prepared to proceed was that of a Triple Pact between Great Britain, France and Russia. M. Maisky had asked that he might be given some message as to the decision of His Majesty's Government before he left for Geneva that same evening. Sir R. Vansittart had undertaken that M. Maisky should receive some reply but had pointed out that, in any case, the Secretary of State would have chances of discussing the matter with M. Maisky at Geneva.

No record of M. Maisky's communication of May 19 or of any reply to him on the evening of that day has been traced in the Foreign Office archives, but telegram No. 111 to Moscow (No. 554) seems to have been intended, indirectly, as a reply to M. Maisky's request for a message with regard to the decision of His Majesty's Government.

² No. 520.

have to our proposals is not a matter of reciprocity (properly so-called) at all, but arises from their feeling that a difference exists between the situation of the Soviet Union and that of Great Britain, France and Poland. The latter have all made reciprocal arrangements of mutual assistance amongst themselves, whereas the Soviet Union has no such arrangement except the Franco-Soviet Pact. The Soviet Government accordingly can claim that whereas Great Britain, France and Poland all receive something in return for the undertaking into which they have entered, they themselves receive nothing in return for the declaration which we ask them to make. The Soviet Government also seem to fear that the mere fact of their making the proposed declaration might provoke a direct attack upon the Soviet Union by Germany, and that in the absence of a direct guarantee from Great Britain and France to meet this contingency and in the absence also of a guarantee by Great Britain and France to Latvia, Estonia and Finland, such an attack might be aimed at the Soviet Union through those countries.

5. There is also the possibility, in the Soviet view (such are their suspicions), that Germany might attack the Soviet Union through Poland or Roumania with the connivance of, or at least without provoking the resistance of, those countries. Seeing that our guarantee to those countries depends on their offering resistance, we might not be involved, and the Soviet Union would be left alone to deal with a German aggression.

6. If the Soviet Government really entertain this fear, it is evident that we shall have to undertake some commitment to allay it.

7. The first question, therefore, is whether there is any way in which we can do this short of accepting the Soviet proposal for a simple three-Power pact of mutual assistance.

The French Plan

8. The only suggestion alternative to our own and to the Soviet proposal is the French plan, which has been formulated as follows:—

‘If France and Great Britain found themselves in a state of war with Germany as a result of the action which they had taken with a view to preventing all changes by force of the existing *status quo* in Central or Eastern Europe, the U.S.S.R. would immediately lend them aid and assistance.

‘If the U.S.S.R. found itself in a state of war with Germany as a result of the action which it had taken with a view to preventing all changes by force of the existing *status quo* in Central or Eastern Europe, France and Great Britain would immediately lend it aid and assistance.

‘The three Governments would concert without delay on the nature, in both cases contemplated, of this assistance and will take all steps to ensure its full efficacy.’

9. A subsequent telegram from Paris shows that the French Government intended by their reference to ‘Central or Eastern Europe’ to cover Poland, Roumania and Turkey only (Paris telegram No. 207³).

³ No. 548.

10. Thus, this proposal does not meet the Soviet requirements, as it only covers the case of German aggression through Poland, Roumania or Turkey. On the other hand, while securing Soviet assistance in the case of aggression against those countries, it does not bind the Soviet Government to come to our assistance if we are the victims of German aggression either direct or through Holland, Belgium or Switzerland.

Possible Alternatives

11. There is no other definite proposal before us,⁴ and if the foregoing analysis of the considerations which govern the Soviet attitude is correct, it may be that there is no alternative between agreeing to a three-Power pact such as the Soviet Government advocate and allowing the present negotiations to fail. It is desirable, therefore, to examine the possible results of adopting either of these courses.

12. As a preliminary, it may be well to consider what was our objective in the first instance in soliciting the aid of the Soviet Government.

13. The principal object of our guarantee to Poland was to deter Germany from any further acts of aggression, and by obtaining a reciprocal guarantee from Poland to ensure that, if war must ensue, Germany would have to fight on two fronts. We have been told that this is essential. Germany is unable at the moment to embark on a war on two fronts. If she were free to expand eastward and to obtain control of the resources of Central and Eastern Europe, she might then be strong enough to turn upon the Western countries with overwhelming strength.

14. Our object was, therefore, beginning with our guarantee of Polish independence, to build up a peace front to the East and South-east of Germany consisting of Roumania, Poland, Turkey and Greece. Of this combination Poland was the key, and Poland's position would be precarious in face of a hostile or perhaps even of a neutral Soviet Union. Our only practicable lines of communication with Poland in case of war would lie through Russian territory.

15. We therefore wished to be assured of at least the benevolent neutrality of the Soviet Union, and better still of the probability of assistance being afforded by that country to Poland and Roumania in case of attack.

Polish and Roumanian Misgivings

16. We could not ask of the Soviet Union anything more positive or binding than what we did, in fact, suggest in view of the misgivings on the part of the Polish and Roumanian Governments. We were early made aware of these misgivings by the reception of our proposal for a Four-Power Consultative Pact between Great Britain, France, the Soviet Union and Poland.⁵ The Polish Government at once indicated that they were unwilling to be associated in this manner with the Soviet Government⁶, and we discovered

⁴ *Note in original:* Telegram No. 9 (L.N.) [No. 578] forming Annex (2) to this paper, [see note 10 below], has been received since the above was written.

⁵ See Volume IV of this Series, No. 446.

⁶ *Ibid.*, No. 518.

subsequently that the Roumanian Government would share these misgivings. Both of those countries mistrusted the Soviet Union, did not expect anything very concrete in the way of material assistance from her, and feared that if they definitely associated themselves with the Soviet Union, that might offer just the provocation that would be required to drive Herr Hitler into an act of aggression.

17. Recently it has been asserted in various quarters that too much weight can be given to these misgivings, and that, in point of fact, neither Poland nor Roumania would object to an arrangement which, while⁷ having the disadvantage of associating them openly with the Soviet Government, would secure that the latter would, in the event of war, be ready to render assistance if desired.

18. We are consulting the Polish and Roumanian Governments by telegram on this point and are pointing out to them that the scheme which we might have to propose to the Soviet Government, while providing that the latter would in certain eventualities be under an obligation to render assistance to Poland and Roumania, would ensure that such assistance would only be given subject to the consent of, and in a manner approved by, those Governments.⁸

19. It seems essential, in the first place, to clear up these doubts. There would be no point in securing an undertaking of assistance by the Soviet Government if the effect of that were to be to deter the Polish and Roumanian Governments from figuring openly in a *bloc* organised to resist German aggression.

20. If the Polish and Roumanian Governments are not wholly in principle opposed to the close association of Great Britain and France with the Soviet Union, it remains to consider *the advantages and disadvantages of such association*.

Disadvantages of proposed Anglo-Soviet Pact

21. A triple pact of mutual assistance between Great Britain, France, and the Soviet Union would be represented as the formation of an 'ideological' *bloc* against the Axis Powers. It would be said that—abandoning any further attempt to remain impartial—we were deliberately aligning for war between rival groups of Powers: it would be inferred that His Majesty's Government had finally given up all hope of arriving at a settlement with Germany and that accordingly they had reached the conclusion that war was inevitable and were therefore marshalling their forces.

22. In view of the attitude which Herr Hitler has adopted in the past in regard to the Soviet Union, it might be assumed that our association with the Soviet Government would still further infuriate him and impel him to aggressive action.

23. In the light of many of Signor Mussolini's speeches on the subject of Communism in Spain, it might be expected that Italy would be finally alienated.

24. Similarly, in Spain, the Government of General Franco, which

⁷ The word 'not' appears to have been omitted here.

⁸ See No. 556.

represents itself as having conducted a successful crusade against Communism, might be driven still further into the anti-Comintern party.

25. And there are other countries, such as Portugal, Finland and Yugoslavia, where a close association between His Majesty's Government and the Soviet Union would have adverse effects on our relations. It might even be said that such an association would weaken yet further the Balkan Entente and render more difficult our chances of consolidating it. Nor must it be forgotten that the Vatican regard Moscow even to a greater degree than Berlin as Anti-Christ.

26. The effect upon Japan, where there has recently been considerable hesitation in regard to Japanese association with the Axis Powers, might also be disastrous. Although we have assured the Japanese Government that any agreement that we might make with the Soviet Government would relate only to Europe, the Japanese Minister for Foreign Affairs recently stated that any Anglo-Soviet *rapprochement* would have bad repercussions in Japan.⁹

27. The acceptance by His Majesty's Government of a policy of a pact with the Soviet Government might be held to mark a definite change of policy. Hitherto, His Majesty's Government have been endeavouring to safeguard the independence of the smaller European States wherever the threat to that independence appeared to be imminent, and the measures which they have taken and the commitments into which they have entered have been on a purely defensive basis. A pact with the Soviet Union, although His Majesty's Government would enter into it in a purely defensive spirit, would easily be represented as assuming an offensive appearance.

28. The German propaganda on the subject of 'encirclement' would be reinforced and might rally the German population behind the régime in Germany and destroy the last vestiges of the influence of the so-called German Moderates. It must, however, be admitted that hitherto the Moderates have done nothing effective to make their influence felt. Moreover, it is they who have impressed on us the need of facing Hitler with a display of strength.

29. There is the further objection that His Majesty's Government, either by the failure of Poland or Roumania to resist a German advance or by a German attack on the Soviet Union by sea or through the Baltic States, might be drawn into a war not for the preservation of the independence of a minor European State, but for the support of the Soviet Union against Germany. On this issue opinion in this country, which is whole-hearted in support of the policy of the protection of the weaker European States, might be seriously divided. The pressure brought to bear upon France during the war in Spain will be fresh in mind, and it cannot be supposed that that example of Soviet methods is the last of its kind. Nor, perhaps, will it be forgotten how embarrassing successive French Governments have found the Franco-Soviet Pact to be.

⁹ In the course of a speech to the annual conference of Japanese prefectural governors on May 8, the Minister for Foreign Affairs said that co-operation between Great Britain and the U.S.S.R. could not be regarded lightly by Japan, whether or not it extended to the Far East.

30. It has also to be considered that the actual material assistance to be expected from the Soviet Union is not very great. It is true that the Soviet fleet might contain a proportion of German naval forces in the Baltic, and that the Soviet air forces might be able to render some assistance. It is, however, unlikely that on land their military effort could be of very much effect, and even in the matter of furnishing munitions and war materials their assistance would be limited by the fact that the Russian transportation system is in an extremely backward state.

31. Finally, if close association with the Soviet Government is to shake the confidence of those friendly Governments to whom we have already given guarantees, it would seem on balance that there would be little advantage in running the various risks which have been pointed out above. We shall, however, be able to weigh this point when we have received replies to the telegrams which have been sent to Warsaw and Bucharest.

Advantages of Proposed Anglo-Soviet Pact

32. So far attention has been drawn to the disadvantages and dangers involved in a pact with the Soviet Government. But there is something to be said on the other side. Though it may be held that such a pact might provoke the Axis Powers to war, it might, on the other hand, be the only way to avert war. Germany is impressed only by a show of strength, and Italian policy has always been to reinsure with the stronger side. If Spain follows in the train of the Axis, we remove danger from that quarter if the Axis can be restrained from war by the fear of overwhelming forces against it. Spain is in no mood and is not in a position to make war on her own, and the same applies, of course, to Portugal and Yugoslavia.

33. Again, the policy which His Majesty's Government have adopted of giving guarantees to various countries must be made as effective as possible. There are signs that our guarantees, unless we can make serious material contribution to the strength of the guaranteed countries, are causing the latter some misgiving. They have put themselves in the forefront of the anti-German *bloc* by accepting our guarantees (and in some cases giving reciprocal guarantees), and in this position they naturally look to us to supply them with material assistance. Poland, having mobilised a large portion of her army, is beginning to feel the pinch economically, and to realise some of her shortages in material. These would have to be made good in great part in war time by importation of foreign material through Soviet territory, and she might therefore be thoroughly uncomfortable with a doubtful Soviet Russia in her rear. And if the eastern front, built up on Poland, were to collapse, Germany would be freed from the fear of a two-front war. Therefore, it might be claimed that a tripartite pact with the Soviet Union, if that is the only means by which we can be assured of the latter's support, is a necessary condition for the consolidation of the front which we have been trying to create.

34. The advantages of a pact with the Soviet Union are to be estimated in great part by contrast with the disadvantages which might arise from a breakdown of the present negotiation.

35. To take the worst possibility, there might be a German-Soviet *rap-prochement*. It is easy enough to realise the danger which this would present, but it is difficult to assess the chances of it happening.

36. It is noticeable that during the past few months anti-Soviet propaganda in Germany has been almost completely damped down: we know that certain members of the German General Staff are in favour of an understanding with the Soviet Union, and we have some evidence that they have lately again been advocating it.

37. As regards German propaganda on the subject of 'encirclement', this no doubt would be worked for all that it is worth. But that might equally be so in the event of our securing the Soviet Government's assent to our own proposals. Anglo-Soviet negotiations are being carefully watched, and if agreement is reached, no matter what the exact terms, that will be represented in interested quarters as an Anglo-Soviet alliance. If the negotiations break down, this also will be made the most of by German propaganda, and the German Government may be encouraged to think that they are free to embark on adventures in Danzig or elsewhere in Eastern Europe.

38. In any arrangement that we may make with the Soviet Government it seems desirable to obtain the utmost that we can for ourselves in exchange for anything that we offer to the Soviet Government. Under our own proposals, though we should secure Soviet assistance in the event of our fulfilling our commitments to Poland and Roumania, we should not secure it in the event of a German aggression in the west. If we were to agree to a pact such as the Soviet Government propose, we should, on the one hand, secure Soviet assistance in the west in all circumstances, and as against that our liability to the Soviet Government would only be increased by the eventuality of a German attack on Soviet Russia by sea or through the Baltic States (considered by the Chiefs of Staff to be rather remote) or through an unresisting Poland or Roumania. Therefore, on balance, we should gain. It would seem desirable to conclude some agreement whereby the Soviet Union would come to our assistance if we were attacked in the West, not only in order to ensure that Germany would have to fight a war on two fronts, but also perhaps for the reason, admitted by the Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs to General Weygand, that it was essential, if there must be a war, to try to involve the Soviet Union in it, otherwise at the end of the war the Soviet Union, with her army intact and England and Germany in ruins would dominate Europe. (There are indications that the real Soviet policy is—and would be—to get us involved and then to try to keep out herself.) Even though we may not be able to count implicitly on the Soviet Government either honestly wishing to fulfil, or being capable of fulfilling, their treaty obligations, nevertheless, the alternative of a Soviet Union completely untrammelled and exposed continually to the temptation of intriguing with both sides and of playing off one side against the other might present a no less, perhaps more, dangerous situation than that produced by collaborating with a dishonest or an incompetent partner.

39. In view of close Turkish-Soviet relations, the negotiation of the further

agreement which we contemplate with Turkey would be assisted by an Anglo-Soviet agreement. Turkey might be embarrassed in meeting her commitments under the Anglo-Turkish Declaration regarding the Mediterranean if she were uncertain as to the position of the Soviet Government. And it may be difficult to induce Turkey to assume more definite commitments in regard to an aggression against Roumania unless she can feel that the Soviet Union forms part of the organisation against aggression.

40. In order to visualise what kind of formula would be required to meet the wishes of the Soviet Government, while at the same time securing that Soviet assistance would be available for Poland and Roumania, the following rough draft has been evolved:—

‘If the U.S.S.R. is engaged in hostilities with a European Power, in consequence either of aggression by that Power against another European State which has requested Soviet assistance, or of aggression by that Power against the U.S.S.R., France and Great Britain will give the U.S.S.R. all the support and assistance in their power.

‘If France and Great Britain are engaged in hostilities with a European Power, in consequence either of aggression by that Power against another European State which has requested their assistance, or of aggression by that Power against either of them, the U.S.S.R. will give France and Great Britain all the support and assistance in her power.

‘The three Governments will concert together as to the methods by which such mutual support and assistance could, in case of need, be made most effective.

‘It is understood that the rendering of support and assistance in the above cases is without prejudice to the rights and position of other Powers.’

41. Annexed are two telegrams from the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs giving an account of his discussion with French Ministers.¹⁰

¹⁰ These telegrams are printed as Nos. 576 and 578.

No. 590

Sir W. Seeds (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 3)

No. 154 [C 7935/3356/18]

MOSCOW, May 22, 1939

My Lord,

Your Lordship's telegram No. 111¹ which reached me on the 20th instant, instructing me to inform the Soviet Government that His Majesty's Government were making every effort to reach an agreement and hoped to send a reply shortly, arrived at a most opportune moment. For I had been since the previous evening in a state of considerable uneasiness in regard to the effect which that day's full-dress debate in the House of Commons² on foreign

¹ No. 554.

² See Parl. Deb., 5th Ser., H. of C., vol. 347, cols. 1809–84.

affairs, as reported by British wireless, might be expected to produce on the mind of the Soviet high authorities: and my anxiety was confirmed by the omission of the local morning papers of the 20th to do more than quote the names of the chief speakers. I therefore welcomed Your Lordship's telegram which would serve to remove the menace of a thunderous Tass communiqué or 'Izvestiya' article.

2. M. Potemkin took careful note of Your Lordship's message which I repeated to him in exact accordance with the text of your instructions, and then asked me whether I was personally optimistic. I said emphatically that I was, that to my knowledge Your Lordship's expression about 'every' effort might be more rightly construed as 'great' effort, and that in my personal opinion—taking all difficulties into consideration—it would not be the fault of His Majesty's Government if a satisfactory solution were not found. I added that I was disgusted with the flood of press reports and comments which with their inevitable inexactitudes were swamping the Anglo-Soviet conversations, and I told him frankly that I had urged the Foreign Office to do anything possible in these press-ridden days to secure discretion. The Soviet Government, I said, were in a stronger position than ourselves in such matters and would, I was certain, co-operate towards that object.

3. M. Potemkin answered that the Soviet Government were legitimately proud of the discretion shown by their press: this would be, he could assure me, maintained although it exposed the Soviet Authorities to the resentment of the journalists (presumably the foreign correspondents here) who were naturally anxious to report on 'the most important international conversations' of the present time.

4. The next morning, the local press published a fuller, though evidently much censored, account of the House of Commons debate of May 19. If the Prime Minister's speech was severely emasculated, it was at any rate satisfactory that Mr. Lloyd George's speech was also considerably minimised. I may add that no comments or leading articles on the Anglo-Soviet negotiations have appeared since the famous 'Izvestiya' outburst of May 11.³

I have, &c.,

WILLIAM SEEDS

³ See No. 481.

No. 591

United Kingdom Delegation (Geneva) to Sir A. Cadogan

(Received May 23, 12.10 p.m.)

No. 11 L.N. Telegraphic [C 7552/3356/18]

GENEVA, May 23, 1939, 10.30 a.m.

I had conversation with Latvian Minister for Foreign Affairs yesterday during which we touched on current Anglo-Soviet conversations.

2. M. Munters said that Latvia had a Treaty of Non-Aggression with Russia¹ and was in negotiation for a Treaty of Non-Aggression with Germany.

¹ This Treaty of 1932 is printed in *British and Foreign State Papers*, vol. 135, p. 638.

Should the latter negotiations be successfully concluded Latvia would have non-aggression treaties with two great Powers with whom she was in closest contact and he hoped this would result in establishment of Latvian neutrality. That being so he threw out idea that any arrangements reached between Great Britain, France and Russia might if they covered Baltic States at all take the form of some kind of guarantee of that neutrality. He did not wish this to be regarded as an official proposal on the part of his Government nor did he know whether as a matter of fact Estonian or Finnish Governments would agree with it. I told him that we would think about this.

3. It may be worth while considering suggestion and to facilitate examination I have tried to introduce this idea into a revised version of draft B (paragraph 4 of my telegram to Warsaw No. 165²) and result is shown in my immediately following telegram.³ I have of course not shown this draft to any foreign Delegation and it could, of course, fit into any other draft we might decide to adopt.

² No. 556.

³ No. 592.

No. 592

United Kingdom Delegation (Geneva) to Sir A. Cadogan

(Received May 23, 12.10 p.m.)

No. 12 L.N. Telegraphic [C 7552/3356/18]

GENEVA, May 23, 1939, 10.30 a.m.

Following is text referred to in my immediately preceding telegram.¹

(Draft F).

1. If the U.S.S.R. is engaged in hostilities with a European Power in consequence of either (1) aggression by that Power against another European State which the U.S.S.R. had, in conformity with the wishes of that State, undertaken to assist against such aggression, (2) assistance given by the U.S.S.R. to another European State which had requested such assistance in order to resist a violation of its neutrality or (3) aggression by a European Power against the U.S.S.R., France and the United Kingdom will give the U.S.S.R. all the support and assistance in their power.

2. If France and the United Kingdom are engaged in hostilities with a European Power in consequence of either (1) aggression by that Power against another European State which they had, in conformity with the wishes of that State, undertaken to assist against such aggression, (2) assistance given by them to another European State which had requested such assistance in order to resist a violation of its neutrality, or (3) aggression by a European Power against either France or the United Kingdom, the U.S.S.R. will give France and the United Kingdom all the support and assistance in its power.

¹ No. 591.

3. The three Governments will concert together as to the methods by which such neutral [*sic* ? mutual] support and assistance could in case of need be made most effective.

4. It is understood that the rendering of support and assistance in the above cases is without prejudice to the rights and position of other Powers.

5. The three Governments will communicate to each other the terms of any undertakings referred to in paragraph 1 (1) above which they have already given. Any of them which may in future be considering the giving of such an undertaking will consult the other two Governments before doing so and will communicate to them the terms of any undertaking so given.

No. 593

Sir P. Loraine (Rome) to Sir A. Cadogan

(Received May 23, 10.30 p.m.)

No. 476 Telegraphic [R 4308/399/22]

ROME, May 23, 1939, 7.15 p.m.

In my telegram No. 463¹ I offered you my impressions on Signor Mussolini's speech at Turin and subsequent events have not led me to alter my opinion.

2. Since then the Duce has spoken again at Cuneo—see my telegram No. 473² and his 'postscript' tends to confirm my diagnosis for it sets a [*sic* ? an] undefined limit to time which remains to untie the 'knots'.³

3. We are therefore in the presence of a veiled ultimatum and I fear German alliance coupled with Gayda report of yesterday evening—see my telegram No. 174 Saving,⁴ shows us the Italian and German calculation of military strength and political determination that lies behind ultimatum.

4. In my judgment ultimatum is addressed to France and is not addressed to the United Kingdom except in so far as we are associated with France.

5. The Turin speech was intended to elicit proposals from France. France has maintained silence and so far as Italy is aware the United Kingdom has not encouraged France to break the silence. Italian object has not therefore been obtained. Signor Mussolini is nettled because he hoped for some gesture that would in his idea strengthen his hands *vis-à-vis* Germany and (? keep)⁵ his bridges open towards the democracies and actually bring in a profit that would justify him in Italian eyes. So he therefore utters another warning at Cuneo and declares it to be his last. Meanwhile alliance with Germany is

¹ Not printed. In this telegram of May 16 Sir P. Loraine reported that Signor Mussolini's speech consisted of demands for concessions from Great Britain and France without any contribution on the Italian side to the re-establishment of international co-operation on the basis of legality.

² Not printed. This speech of May 20 reasserted the importance of the Italo-German alliance as providing 'a *bloc* of 150 million men against whom there will be nothing to be done'.

³ Signor Mussolini had referred at Turin to 'knots in the international problems that must be loosened and in a short space of time'.

⁴ Not printed.

⁵ The text is here uncertain.

drafted: while professing a will to stabilize peace it nevertheless provides just as much for offensive as for defensive action and its text certainly authorises conclusion that it pledges Italy's military support unconditionally to Germany (and vice versa) in the event of war whether defensive or offensive. In this connexion use of the expression 'living space' as a doctrine enshrined in an international instrument seems particularly ominous.

6. I cannot but view the situation with anxiety. You agreed with my suggestion to you in London that we should burn no bridges which one day Italians might wish to recross. But with the swift development of events in . . .⁵ ruling we seem in the position of watching in silence while Signor Mussolini under various kinds of pressure is prepared to burn them.

7. We can expect nothing from Paris: my French colleague reported about a fortnight ago Count Ciano's description of Italian *desiderata* as regards Jibuti, Tunis and Suez and has received no reaction at all from his Government (I beg you to respect his confidence). He is firmer than ever in his own opinion that road to conversations ought to be opened up between Paris and Rome. He sees the sands running out and his hands are tied. He calculates that in another two or three weeks the alliance of totalitarians will make another violent movement.

8. In these circumstances I feel it my duty to urge that Your Lordship or the Prime Minister should make some public statement preferably in Parliament and therefore before Whitsun recess which will show Signor Mussolini that his remarks at Turin and Cuneo have not merely fallen into a void and to show world opinion that His Majesty's Government are for their part always ready to talk on any wide and mutual by acceptable basis.

9. May I suggest the form should be somewhat as follows.

10. His Majesty's Government have carefully considered Signor Mussolini's two speeches in Piedmont. Signor Mussolini with all the weight of his authority has pointed out that there are knots in the international position which need unravelling: he has expressed the belief that these knots can be untied without drawing the sword: he has once again asserted Fascist Italy's desire for peace. His Majesty's Government agree with Signor Mussolini on the first two points: they note with real satisfaction the third point. The belief of His Majesty's Government that all international difficulties can be settled by friendly negotiation and without recourse to war is unchanged. They therefore welcome the statements in question made by Signor Mussolini. Ends.

11. Alternatively you might wish me, if there are objections to a parliamentary statement, to make a communication in the foregoing sense to Signor Mussolini if I can get at him.

12. I feel basis of my suggestion is closely in accord with your own feelings and those of the Prime Minister as regards handling of Signor Mussolini: it may perhaps check the threatening drift towards war and it cannot I conceive do any harm.

Repeated to Paris.

⁵ The text is here uncertain.

No. 594

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Sir A. Cadogan

(Received May 24, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 241 Telegraphic [E 3828/9/44]

ANGORA, May 23, 1939, 8.25 p.m.

My telegram No. 234.¹

German Chargé d'Affaires has since been active in pressing Turkish Government not to conclude definite agreement with us, at all events pending some German offer; he has even enquired what Turkish Government wanted in the way of a guarantee and what German Government could do to prevent Turkey from signing definitive agreement.

2. Secretary-General has informed Counsellor of conversation on the above lines with German Chargé d'Affaires. Secretary-General in reply took the line that Turkey's mind was made up and that German guarantees could no longer be trusted. On the other hand agreement was not directed against Germany towards which country Turkey's attitude had not altered either as regards economic or political relations. If Germany were not the aggressor she need not worry.

3. German Chargé d'Affaires asked what would be Turkey's position if Germany were involved in hostilities. Secretary-General replied that if Italian co-operation were involved Turkey would act. If Germany were engaged alone matter would need consideration but if Germany were the aggressor Turkey's general attitude was against aggression. Definition of 'aggression' might be difficult but Turkey would act on her own interpretation.

4. German Chargé d'Affaires enquired Turkey's attitude in the event of a plebiscite on Danzig resulting in a demand for union with Germany followed by a Polish march on Danzig. Secretary-General replied that if Germany accepted such a demand Turkey would consider Germany had committed a clear aggression whether Posle had first marched or not. If consequences of such an aggression were to bring Italy in Turkey would act.

Repeated to Berlin.

¹ No. 536.

No. 595

Sir R. Hoare (Bucharest) to Sir A. Cadogan

(Received May 23, 10.30 p.m.)

No. 223 Telegraphic [C 7662/3356/18]

BUCHAREST, May 23, 1939, 8.30 p.m.

Your telegram No. 232¹ and my telegram No. 220.²

Reply is as follows:

Roumanian Government greatly appreciate friendship and confidence which inspire the communication of His Majesty's Government.

¹ No. 556.

² No. 567.

2. They recall that on the basis of formal declaration that Roumania would resist any aggression they received an assurance of help from British and French Governments.

3. Roumanian Government received with satisfaction this assurance which implied the direct and unconditional help of Great Britain and France which they appreciate at its full worth.

4. As negotiations with Soviet Government have been conducted as an independent issue from the help assured to Roumania—which at express request of Roumanian Government would not be mentioned by name whatever the results of the negotiations—only Great Britain and France can judge the real value of these negotiations. Consequently the Roumanian Government cannot assume responsibility of making any suggestion.

Repeated to Geneva.

No. 596

Sir A. Cadogan to Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw)

No. 169 Telegraphic [C 7557/54/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 23, 1939, 10.0 p.m.*

I have been considering whether there is any step that could be taken with a view to preventing a sudden and irremediable clash should a serious crisis arise over Danzig, and in particular whether there is any form of mediation that might be interposed between the Polish and German Governments.

The Pope's recent soundings seem to have discouraged His Holiness from proceeding with his initiative. I wonder whether the neighbouring Scandinavian States would be prepared, if requested, to lend their good offices, either collectively or individually, in an effort to prevent outbreak of war. Even before matters came to an acute crisis, it might be possible for them, for instance, to be associated with a Commission of Enquiry into the recent incident,¹ if that looks like developing seriously. If their services could be available, their intervention might afford at least a breathing space during which a settlement or at any rate a truce might be attempted. Their intervention could, of course, only be effective if it were acceptable to both parties. I have no information to show what their attitude would be to such a suggestion.

I should be glad to learn whether you think that the Polish Government would in the last resort accept such Scandinavian mediation. If you think it desirable you may put the suggestion to Minister for Foreign Affairs and ascertain his views.

I shall not make a similar enquiry in Berlin. I should leave it to M. Beck to suggest ways and means of proceeding with this idea in the event of his approving it, and I should be ready to give all assistance in my power.²

Repeated to Berlin.

¹ i.e. the Kalthof incident: see No. 575.

² In the absence of Lord Halifax at Geneva, this telegram was approved by the Prime Minister.

*United Kingdom Delegation (Geneva) to Sir A. Cadogan
(Received May 24)*

No. 23 Saving: Telegraphic [C 7526/92/55]

GENEVA, May 23, 1939

Following from Secretary of State.

This morning, after preliminary consultation with Swedish Representative, Secretary-General and High Commissioner, I made a statement to the Committee of Three, suggesting that in view of known Polish and German views and particularly having regard to the present tension between the Poles and Danzigers, it would be opportune for the High Commissioner to return to Danzig, stay there for a few days and then come back to report to the Secretary-General. He has a good reason for returning to Geneva in that he is to receive a Swiss university doctorate about June 11. The French Representative agreed and the Swedish Representative while expressing some doubts, said that he would not oppose the suggestion. It has therefore been arranged that Professor Burckhardt shall start for Danzig on May 24, travelling by way of Warsaw, where he may have some consultation with Colonel Beck, and return to Geneva about June 8 or 9 by way of Berlin. A communiqué is being issued to the Press simply to the effect that the Committee of Three met and decided to ask the High Commissioner to return to Danzig for the purpose of making a report.

Sir P. Loraine (Rome) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 26)

No. 176 Saving: Telegraphic [R 4384/57/22]

ROME, May 23, 1939

I am told, though I have no means of verifying the information, that when Count Ciano met Herr von Ribbentrop at Como on May 9, the latter announced that German troops would enter Danzig forty-eight hours later: that Count Ciano telephoned to Mussolini, who objected strongly and said that the respective rights and obligations of the Axis partners must henceforth be definitely fixed. Hence the Treaty of Alliance.

2. I deduce that the foregoing is fairly accurate for it fits in with other things, e.g.

(a) the reluctance of Italy to be drawn into a war over a German-Polish dispute;

(b) the report current here that the first suggestion of an alliance came from the Italian side;

(c) the severe pressure which Italy is exerting to induce Poland to make her peace with Germany and comply in principle with Hitler's proposals;

(d) Hitler's decision to let his issues with Poland stand over for two months.

3. After carefully reading the published text of the Treaty of Alliance and

Gayda's article on it in yesterday's 'Giornale d'Italia', one cannot but be impressed with the completeness of Italy's identification in policy and arms with Germany. The Treaty binds each party to give full military assistance even in a war which we should regard as one of aggression.

4. My impression is that Count Ciano and his particular friends are all out for linking Italy's fate indissolubly with Germany and believe in *la guerre foudroyante* and the ability of Germany and Italy to wage it successfully; that Signor Mussolini would still like to leave himself a road open to reconciliation with the democracies, but feels himself rebuffed, that Italian informed opinion will resign itself, no doubt reluctantly, to the policy of sink or swim with Germany unless a welcome reconciliation with the democracies intervenes very shortly, for which they will expect the democracies to pay a price.

5. At the same time I cannot believe that Mussolini can mean to hitch his country to the German chariot so completely as the Treaty makes it appear, and the following is my guess at his motives.

6. Roughly speaking he has bought the right to be consulted by Hitler and the price paid is the Alliance. On four occasions, we have cause to believe, Hitler has acted without a semblance of effective consultation with his Axis partner; and Mussolini has had to take it or leave it. It was impossible for Mussolini to break the Axis, because it was undefined. It is possible for Mussolini to break the Alliance if Germany fails to observe it. We have here moreover the possible explanation of Mussolini's extreme sensitiveness to any foreign suggestion that the Axis could be broken and was weakening.

7. Taking as sincere, which in a sense we reasonably may do, Mussolini's recent statements that Italy needs peace, the Alliance places him in a stronger position for restraining Hitler from moves which would involve Italy in an unwelcome and unpopular war. And Italy is assured of full German support if she launches another *coup*.

8. On the whole I incline to the view that the Alliance is preferable to the Axis. The situation is more positive: the Alliance has got to be accepted as a strong factor, whether we like it or not. It may just conceivably lead to German action outraging even Italian feelings and patience. It may in the end, and if the precarious state of European non-war can be preserved for a time, give us and the French a definite factor to negotiate with, for the Axis Powers have now pooled their policy and their ambitions. The Alliance may prove less elusive than the Axis.

9. But even if we are entitled to entertain these slender hopes, and we decide nevertheless to persevere in our attempts to avoid a breach with Italy and to keep held out a hand that she may grasp, we cannot blind ourselves to the more ominous factors, e.g. the Duce's belief that the Italo-German combination alone is able to produce dividends for Italy; the underlining by Gayda of the predatory nature of the next war on the part of the have-nots against the haves; the gradual succumbing of Italy, which seems inevitable, to political vassalage and economic inferiority to Germany.

Repeated to Paris and Berlin.

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 25)

No. 209 Saving: Telegraphic [R 4324/57/22]

BERLIN, May 23, 1939

Count Ciano left Berlin at 11 a.m. this morning and was seen off at the station by Herr von Ribbentrop and most of the leading figures of the Government.

Throughout the visit the press was loud in its praise of the Italo-German Pact, the Axis and everything connected therewith, and the eulogies poured upon Herr Hitler, Signor Mussolini, Count Ciano and Herr von Ribbentrop were as comprehensive as was to be expected. Despite preparations on a grand scale the Count's reception was no more than adequate and spontaneous onlookers were not greatly in evidence. On the Monday of the signature of the alliance, however, thousands of school-children lined up in the Wilhelmstrasse cheered lustily and no doubt convinced him that even the ten-year-olds were fully alive to the significance of the Axis and not merely expressing their delight at being given an unexpected holiday. The only person who was really spontaneously cheered by the Berliners was a solitary sanitary inspector who rode his bicycle along the Unter den Linden two minutes before Count Ciano was scheduled to pass by to lay a wreath at the War Memorial.

The Berlin municipal administration are beginning to economise on expenses for decorations. The streets were decorated as gaily as usual and by way of being prepared for any emergencies of this kind all the eagles, flagstuffs and other paraphernalia erected for Herr Hitler's birthday celebrations had been left as they were and they will probably not be dismantled until after the visit of His Royal Highness Prince Paul to Berlin on June 3, or until the authorities feel sure that no further triumphal entries will take place in the near future.

The visit was very fully occupied. Dinners were given by the Chancellor, the Italian Ambassador and Herr von Ribbentrop and luncheons were also ceremonial. A good deal of time was however left for political discussions and the principal actors were in any case in close contact throughout. Count Ciano took tea with Field-Marshal Göring whose position was thus again explicitly recognized.

Repeated to Rome.

*Extract from Record of Conversation between the Secretary of State and M. Cretzianu at Geneva on May 23, 1939 (Received in Foreign Office, May 24)*¹

[C 7547/3356/18]

Poland

M. Cretzianu said that on the 19th May the Polish Ambassador at Bucharest had made a communication about the current Soviet negotiations.

He had described the attitude of the Polish Government as being neither positive or negative. They had no desire to hamper the action of the three Powers. They would formulate reserves only on matters which were of direct concern to Poland. They maintained their attitude as to Polish participation in any agreement with Russia. Any such agreement would be regarded by Germany as a provocation.

The Polish Ambassador had also said that any extension of the Polish-Roumanian alliance so as to direct it against Germany would definitely affect the policy of Hungary.

On this point M. Cretzianu said that M. Gafencu had asked him to tell Lord Halifax that this observation on the part of the Polish Ambassador was not in conformity with what had passed between M. Gafencu and M. Beck during their recent interview.² (On that occasion the two Ministers had agreed that the Polish-Roumanian alliance was of general scope and did not require extension, but that it was open to the two Powers at some convenient date to make technical arrangements under the treaty which would provide for its operation in the event of a German attack.) M. Cretzianu was also to say that, in M. Gafencu's opinion, Hungary was already 100 per cent. on the side of the Axis. The Polish Government, for their part, seemed to think that there was still a chance of Hungary maintaining neutrality.

The Polish Ambassador had also informed the Roumanian Government that it was clear from the interviews between M. Beck and M. Potemkin in Warsaw, and from the interviews between M. Molotov and the Polish Ambassador in Moscow, that the Soviet Government understood and accepted the Polish position as regards the Soviet negotiations.

M. Cretzianu added that when M. Potemkin was in Bucharest he did not ask the Roumanian Government to participate in any arrangement with the Soviet Government, nor did he offer Soviet assistance to Roumania.

¹ This record, and those in Nos. 601 and 602, were made by the British representative for the use of His Majesty's Government. For other subjects discussed with M. Cretzianu, see Nos. 601 and 602.

² See No. 278.

Extract from Record of Conversation between the Secretary of State and M. Cretzianu at Geneva on May 23, 1939 (Received in Foreign Office, May 24)

[C 7548/3356/18]

Anglo-Soviet Negotiations

M. Cretzianu said that he was now in a position to communicate to Lord Halifax the official Roumanian reply to the question put to the Roumanian Government on the 20th May¹ about their attitude to the current Anglo-Soviet negotiations.

He then read the reply, which was to the following effect:—

‘The Roumanian Government highly appreciate the spirit of confidence and friendship which inspired the *démarche* made by Sir R. Hoare on behalf of His Majesty’s Government.

‘(1) The Roumanian Government recall that after making a formal declaration to the effect that Roumania would resist by force of arms any act of aggression, the Roumanian Government received an assurance of assistance from the British and French Governments.

‘(2) The Roumanian Government accepted with satisfaction this assurance, which represents in their eyes the direct and unconditional support of Great Britain and France, support which the Roumanian Government appreciate at its full value.

‘(3) In these conditions, since the negotiations with the Soviet Union are being conducted quite irrespective of the assurance of assistance given to Roumania (whose name will, at the express request of the Roumanian Government, not be mentioned, whatever the results of the negotiations may be), Great Britain and France are alone in a position to estimate the true value of these negotiations.

‘Consequently, the Roumanian Government cannot take the responsibility of formulating any suggestion.’

M. Cretzianu recalled that M. Gafencu had said in London that Roumania did not wish to take an active part in any system involving assistance from the Soviet Union. In the first place, if Roumania entered into such an arrangement and became part of the Soviet system Roumania would no longer be a buffer State between the Soviet Union and Germany, and a Soviet-German frontier, which at present did not exist, would in effect be established along the western frontier of Roumania. In the second place, public opinion in Roumania would be disturbed if there should be any suggestion that the only way for Roumania to escape German aggression was to be occupied by the Soviet Union. M. Gafencu did not say that in time of danger Roumania would not wish for Soviet assistance; but Roumania did not wish to make arrangements for such assistance in time of peace.

¹ See No. 556.

The reply of the Roumanian Government which he had just read meant that Roumania did not wish to stand in the way of Great Britain and France in their Soviet negotiations.

Lord Halifax emphasised that he did not yet know what the decision of His Majesty's Government would be in this matter, but he had wanted to put the position to the Roumanian Government.

M. Cretzianu asked whether an agreement was likely to be reached on the lines set out in Sir R. Hoare's communication.

Lord Halifax said it was as yet quite impossible to say. He had had a long talk with M. Maisky at Geneva. M. Maisky had said that no agreement was possible unless Great Britain and France could accept the principle of a direct triple arrangement. If that could be accepted everything else could easily be arranged. He had told M. Maisky that it would be essential to have regard to the views of Poland and Roumania and the Baltic States.

M. Cretzianu enquired whether it was likely that a decision would be taken in London tomorrow.

Lord Halifax said he could not tell. He did not know how the minds of His Majesty's Government had been working since he left London.

M. Cretzianu said that from the Roumanian point of view two points were essential. First, that Roumania should not be mentioned; secondly, that assistance should be given to Roumania only if Roumania requested it.

Lord Halifax observed that if an agreement could be reached with the Soviet Union, it would be easier to reach a final agreement with Turkey.

No. 602

Extract from Record of Conversation between the Secretary of State and M. Cretzianu at Geneva on May 23, 1939 (Received in Foreign Office, May 24)

[R 4310/661/67]

Yugoslavia and the Anglo-Turkish Agreement

M. Cretzianu said that M. Gafencu had asked him to give Lord Halifax an account of conversations he had had with Prince Paul and the Yugoslav Foreign Minister.

He had seen Prince Paul and M. Markovitch on the 5th May at Belgrade on his way home. He had found M. Markovitch's attitude unsatisfactory. He seemed very frightened and ready to slip towards the Axis. M. Markovitch was also seriously contemplating making a direct arrangement with Hungary under pressure from the Axis Powers.

M. Cretzianu explained that Roumania had two treaty arrangements with Yugoslavia: (1) the Treaty constituting the Balkan Entente, and (2) the

Treaty arrangement directed against Hungary.¹ If Yugoslavia had made a direct arrangement with Hungary, the latter agreement would lapse. This was one of the ways in which the Axis Powers were trying to take Yugoslavia out of the Balkan Entente.

M. Gafencu also saw Prince Paul and found his attitude less unsatisfactory. He was, of course, frightened and hesitating, but he hated Italy, had no sympathy with Germany and was suspicious of Bulgaria and Hungary. He was also devoted to England. In M. Gafencu's view it was important to exert influence on Prince Paul, who alone was capable of keeping Yugoslavia's policy on the right lines. Prince Paul had promised M. Gafencu that Yugoslavia would not make any special agreement with Hungary.

Shortly after this, M. Markovitch had told the Roumanian Ambassador in Belgrade that the conclusion of the Anglo-Turkish Agreement was contrary to the understanding reached between the members of the Balkan Entente, that they would always adopt an attitude of independence. In support of this contention M. Markovitch referred to a paragraph in the Bucharest agreement of last March in which the members of the Balkan Entente agreed not to adhere to any ideological group.² In the Roumanian view, this meant that no member of the Balkan Entente would join the Anti-Comintern Pact. M. Markovitch seemed to interpret it in another sense. He complained that the Turkish Government had made an agreement with Great Britain without asking the advice of their Balkan allies. A Balkan State had thus tied itself to a Great Power forming part of one of the two great European groups. He held that this was contrary to the Bucharest agreement and to the policy of independence adopted by the Balkan Entente. He was afraid that this would give the Axis Powers an occasion to bring pressure to bear upon the Yugoslav Government, and to ask whether Yugoslavia intended to remain a member of the Balkan Entente when that Entente no longer pursued a policy of independence.

M. Gafencu had recently seen M. Markovitch again. M. Markovitch had told him that this question had, indeed, been clearly put to him when he visited Rome, and he was afraid that the question would be put in an even more menacing form when Prince Paul and himself visited Berlin on the 1st June. In Rome both Prince Paul and M. Markovitch had informed the Italian Government that the conclusion of the Anglo-Turkish Agreement had not modified the policy of independence of the Balkan States. They had taken no engagement in Rome which could weaken the policy of the Balkan Entente; they had not agreed that Yugoslavia should either leave the League of Nations or join the Anti-Comintern Pact.

In M. Markovitch's view, the Balkan Entente ought now to settle what its policy should be, i.e., whether it should maintain its policy of independence, or whether it should fall in with one of the two great European groups. If the decision were to join one of the groups, Yugoslavia was firmly decided not to depart from her policy of neutrality and would be compelled, in that event, to part company with her allies.

¹ See No. 55, note 1.

² See No. 440, note 3.

To this M. Gafencu had replied that any weakening of the Balkan Entente would be fatal. It was necessary that the Entente should be firmly united not only in time of war but in time of peace.

M. Markovitch had agreed.

M. Gafencu told him that he was convinced that the Balkan Entente would fulfil its task of defending the territorial integrity and independence of the Balkan States so long as it could confirm its independence. Independence must be understood as meaning not only that the Balkan Entente would not throw in its lot with the Western Powers, but also that it would not lend an ear to the advice of, or be intimidated by the threats of the Berlin-Rome Axis. He told M. Markovitch that he was ready to ask the Turkish Government to pay heed to the views of the Yugoslav Government.

M. Markovitch had agreed with this point of view.

M. Gafencu had said that the part of the Anglo-Turkish Agreement which dealt with the Mediterranean did not affect the Balkan Entente directly. It did, however, strengthen Turkey's position in the Straits and in the Mediterranean, and this was obviously of advantage to the Balkan Entente. If the members of the Balkan Entente became engaged in hostilities, their position would be fortified if the Straits were opened either as a channel for assistance or as a line of retreat if necessary.

M. Markovitch had agreed that the Mediterranean part of the Anglo-Turkish Agreement would be useful to Yugoslavia also. Any extension of the Anglo-Turkish Agreement to the Balkans would, however, be inimical to the independence of the Balkan Entente.

M. Gafencu had told M. Markovitch that he had asked the Turkish Government to bear the Yugoslav point of view in mind and that the Turkish Government had replied that the Anglo-Turkish Agreement would not refer to the question of the security of the Balkan States.

M. Markovitch had replied that there was a reference to the Balkans in paragraph 5 [6] of the Anglo-Turkish Agreement which caused the Yugoslav Government some anxiety. He did not press the point, but said he hoped that no allusion to the Balkan Entente would be made in any further agreement reached between Great Britain and Turkey. He was afraid that if the Anglo-Turkish written agreement spoke of Balkan security, there would be an increase of pressure from the Axis.

M. Cretzianu said that M. Gafencu had asked him to explain to Lord Halifax that there already was a parallelism between the Balkan Entente and the Anglo-Turkish Agreement. Great Britain had undertaken to help Turkey under the Anglo-Turkish Agreement, and had undertaken to help Roumania and Greece by the Prime Minister's Declaration. At the same time Turkey was pledged, by her membership of the Balkan Entente, to defend the Balkan frontiers of Roumania and Greece. M. Gafencu therefore thought it better to avoid making any reference to the Balkan question in any further Anglo-Turkish Agreement lest this should have the result of driving Yugoslavia out of the Balkan Entente. The Balkan Pact already covered any attack upon the Balkan frontiers of the members of the Entente. Thus, if

there were any attack by Italy on Yugoslavia or Greece through Albania, the Balkan Pact would operate.³

Lord Halifax said he quite understood that if Roumania were attacked by Bulgaria, Turkey would go to her assistance. But what would happen if Roumania were attacked through Hungary?

M. Cretzianu replied that Turkey would see to it that Bulgaria did not attack Roumania from the south. The Balkan Entente and the Anglo-Turkish Agreement together helped Roumania in two ways. They assured Roumania against Bulgarian attack, and they would keep the Straits open for Roumania's use.

M. Cretzianu continued his account of the conversations between M. Gafencu and M. Markovitch. M. Markovitch had thought that if no public mention was made of any Anglo-Turkish Agreement about the Balkans, the Prince Regent and he would not have too difficult a time in Berlin.

M. Gafencu had drawn the attention of M. Markovitch to his *démarche* at Angora, the object of which was to fortify the Balkan Entente so that the Entente could affirm its independence and solidarity. He had also pointed out that hesitation on the part of any one member of the Entente would weaken the whole Entente. He had also told M. Markovitch that members of the Balkan Entente ought now to find a way of fortifying the reciprocal engagements of the members inside the Entente itself so as to strengthen the Entente as a whole against other Powers.

M. Markovitch had seemed to agree with the wisdom of this.

Though Prince Paul had seemed receptive to the suggestion that he might go to London as well as to Berlin, M. Markovitch had not mentioned to M. Gafencu the possibility of a visit to London.

M. Markovitch had told M. Gafencu that the Italian Government had insisted on Yugoslavia making a special agreement with Hungary.

Lord Halifax said he was grateful to M. Cretzianu for communicating this information to him. His Majesty's Government would have regard to the difficulties of Yugoslavia. It would be a misfortune if matters should be so conducted as to drive Yugoslavia out of the Balkan Entente.

M. Cretzianu said that M. Gafencu was deeply concerned to strengthen the Entente and to prevent the departure of Yugoslavia.

Lord Halifax said that M. Cretzianu's communication was most interesting. He saw the full importance of taking account of Yugoslavia's views. The position was difficult and delicate and care would have to be taken not to make it more difficult. It was of the first importance to preserve Balkan unity.

³ Albania was not a member of the Balkan Entente, and it was not entirely clear what the position of the Balkan Powers would be in the circumstances mentioned by M. Cretzianu. In 1936 Greece had declared that she could not take any action under the Pact which would automatically involve her in war with Italy, and it was felt in the Foreign Office that neither Yugoslavia nor Greece would be likely to pledge herself to take action against Italy unless attacked.

M. Cretzianu said that the diplomatic action of the Axis Powers was now being concentrated on forcing Yugoslavia out of the Balkan Entente.

Lord Halifax said that he had seen the Yugoslav delegate in Geneva on the previous day. His report had been rather encouraging. Yugoslavia's policy might be prudent, but Yugoslavia was in heart and sympathy on the side of France and Great Britain. M. Soubotitch had seemed to leave the impression that Yugoslavia welcomed the conclusion of the Anglo-Turkish arrangement, but was rather sore at not having been informed of it in advance. He had, however, suggested that difficulties might arise if steps were taken to deal with the Balkans.

Lord Halifax asked M. Cretzianu to thank M. Gafencu for his courtesy in communicating this information to him.

No. 603

Sir P. Loraine (Rome) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 30)

No. 463 [R 4436/7/22]

ROME, May 23, 1939

My Lord,

I have the honour, with reference to my telegram No. 476¹ of today's date, to inform you that the French Ambassador called on me yesterday evening and in the course of conversation implied that he was rather in despair over the evident determination of the French Government not to treat with the Italians. Although he fully appreciates the difficulties of M. Daladier's position *vis-à-vis* of [*sic*] the Chamber and important sections of public opinion, he nevertheless believes that it would be the wisest course to open up conversations with the Italian Government. He also let me understand that, if there were any exchanges proceeding through channels other than the French Embassy, he had no knowledge of them or, of course, responsibility for them.

2. M. François-Poncet said that he had missed no opportunity lately in expressing the view to the Quai d'Orsay that some gesture should be made towards the Italian Government, and twelve days ago he had telegraphed to say that he had, in course of conversation with Count Ciano, received from the latter an outline of the terms on the basis of which the Italian Government were ready to talk with the French Government. These terms have already in one form or another been disclosed, and are as follows:—

- (1) Free port at Jibuti, and the sale of the part of the Jibuti Railway that lies in Ethiopia.
- (2) French support in obtaining representation on the board of the Suez Canal.
- (3) Substantiation of the present status of Italians in Tunis.

3. As regards (3), the French Ambassador had replied to Count Ciano that

¹ No. 593.

he could not say whether the French Government would agree to a permanent arrangement, but that it might be possible to prolong the present arrangement for, say, five years, during which time some agreement might be discussed. M. François-Poncet said that he had received no reply from the Quai d'Orsay, and he was much distressed about the situation, as he felt that the circumstances demanded that his Government should take immediate action towards a reconciliation with Italy.

4. It seems pretty certain that Signor Mussolini is annoyed that no notice has been taken by France of this definite sign from the Italian side that he was prepared to hold out his hand to France on, to his mind, reasonable terms, and I may remind you that I have heard these terms described as Italy's *minimum* conditions. Yet, in his speech at Turin on the 14th May, Signor Mussolini was moderate and made no blatant attack on France. 'There are knots in European politics, but to undo these knots it is perhaps not necessary to have recourse to the sword. Nevertheless, these knots must be undone, because sometimes hard reality is preferred to too long a period of uncertainty!' These words sum up possibly the sincere feelings of the Duce, and, by them, he wished to tell the French Government that, if they wished for a reconciliation, they must not delay. A week later, on the 20th May, the Duce spoke again in (for him) measured terms, but there was more of a threat in his words. 'I spoke clearly at Turin, and this speech at Cuneo can be considered as a postscript. Now I shall preserve silence.'²

5. It seems to me that the situation is serious. The Italian Government may now have concluded that France, for her own reasons, is bent on war. I do not know whether this possibility can be definitely excluded. Lord Perth expressed the opinion that the Italian Government probably held this view, and he agreed, too, that some direct action on our part with Signor Mussolini might be useful (see his telegram No. 362³ of the 19th April). M. François-Poncet, as I have said above, is strongly in favour of the French Government taking immediate measures to improve their relations with this country. I share these expressions of opinion. The reasons for French inaction may be sound, having regard to their internal situation, but French inaction is undoubtedly aggravating the position of Signor Mussolini, who, even though he has himself to blame for the fix he is in, does not want war and would probably like to have the means to act as a check on Herr Hitler. On the other hand, M. Daladier is the prisoner of his own statement that France will never yield an inch of her territory, &c. If, therefore, it is possible in any way to ease the tension, it can best be done, I think, by the Prime Minister or Your Lordship, and these are the conclusions on which the recommendation which I addressed to Your Lordship in my telegram under reference is based.

6. The French disinclination to accept anything in the way of British mediation in Franco-Italian difficulties debarred me from suggesting that you should bring further and possibly unwelcome pressure to bear on

² See No. 529, note 1 and No. 593, notes 1, 2, and 3.

³ No. 214.

M. Daladier which would not be necessarily effective and is likely to use up some precious days. I have therefore attempted to indicate a course which should give some personal satisfaction to Signor Mussolini, and to that extent lessen the strain, without exposing us to any reproach from the French side of interfering in an essentially Franco-Italian issue.

7. I have sent a copy of this despatch to His Majesty's Representative at Paris.

I have, &c.,
PERCY LORAINÉ

No. 604

Letter from Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Sir A. Cadogan

[C 7876/54/18]

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, May 23, 1939

The Consul at Danzig anticipates a move by the Danzigers early in June. I am quite ready to believe that he will be right. I have little doubt but that officially the Italians have in their own interests recommended Germany to go slow and that a two or three months' pause is the official policy.

But whatever anybody else may say things do not go like that in Germany. Hitler is a directing brain for the big things but he leaves his subordinates a free hand in detail.¹ It is apparently what Ludecke in his book calls Hitler's 'Österreichische Schlamperei'.²

It was not Hitler who arranged last year the Sudeten troubles after Berchtesgaden and the exodus of Sudeten refugees which, in my opinion, was mainly responsible for the change in Hitler's attitude at Godesberg. It was rather Himmler (who is Ribbentrop's greatest friend) and his S.S. Similarly this year it was not Hitler in Berlin but the same extremist section of the Party in Vienna which worked up the Slovak dispute, which led to the *coup* of March 14-15.

So it may well again be with Danzig. The S.S. are there in force and the most likely form the plot might take is that Danzig should just vote itself into Germany and then say 'what about it?'. If it does not come in June, it will come later. It is, after Hitler's speech on April 28th, quite inevitable that it will come some time.

To my mind the suggestion put forward in paragraph 5 of Kennard's telegram No. 172³ of May 22 is an excellent one—if the Poles can fix it up direct with the German Government. It would be useless our trying to arrange something like that on behalf of the Poles with the German Government unless we were prepared to tell the latter that, after the tension is

¹ Sir O. Sargent noted at this point 'I find it difficult to believe that, when a Nazi *coup* is on foot in foreign affairs, Hitler is prepared to leave the preparations for the *coup* to his subordinates and to allow them to choose the time and manner of launching it.'

² i.e. 'Austrian slovenliness'.

³ No. 584.

passed, we would use our influence at Warsaw to secure an 'equitable' settlement. The Germans, even so, would then ask what we meant by 'equitable' and I have no idea how far His Majesty's Government would be prepared to go in that direction. I am sorry to say (for at heart I do not love the Germans any more than you do and quite possibly even less) that my opinion is that there cannot be two kings in Brentford. Even Versailles did not give Danzig to Poland: *ergo* it must go to Germany.

There will be no hope of peace and stability in Europe now until it does or until after another war. If our guarantee enables Poland to give up their part control of Danzig under favourable arrangements, well and good and everything has been for the best. Prague to my mind altered our whole policy towards Hitler and his gangster crowd, but it did not affect the moral and practical issues so far as Danzig was concerned.

NEVILLE HENDERSON

No. 605

Letter from Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Mr. Kirkpatrick
[C 7772/54/18]

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, May 23, 1939

Could you let me have half a dozen copies of our White Book (Misc. No. 7) on Czechoslovakia last year: the one ending with Hitler's letter of September 27 to the Prime Minister.¹

I have had some rough passages with Germans who deny the 'Wortbruch'² and I find it useful to quote that letter. I have given my own copy away and since then I have been asked for a couple more copies. Of course the letter was never published in Germany.

Have the Foreign Office or His Majesty's Government any views as to the right solution for the Danzig question? It is not enough to say 'No' to the Dictator in a case where there is a grievance. The remedy has also to be found. Otherwise the 'No' has but an ephemeral value (cf. May 21, 1938).

NEVILLE HENDERSON

¹ Cmd. 5847 of 1938.

² i.e. 'broken promise'.

No. 606

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax
(Received May 24, 2.0 p.m.)

No. 243 Telegraphic [R 4313/661/67]

ANGORA, May 24, 1939, 11.24 a.m.

Sir R. Campbell's telegram No. 115.¹

You will have seen from my telegram No. 201² that the Turkish Government have been most careful to keep their Balkan allies informed.

¹ No. 555.

² No. 414.

2. My Yugoslav colleague was given full details on May 7 and was asked to inform his Government. In addition the Turkish Minister at Belgrade was kept *au courant*. There was no reaction from the Minister of State.

3. The Secretary-General thinks complaints voiced in Belgrade are perfunctory. The Greek Government had also displayed reserve. On the other hand he had reason to believe that public opinion in the Balkan States (and even in Hungary and Italy) was relieved at the Anglo-Turkish Declaration.

4. Counsellor has given to the Secretary-General message on the lines of paragraph 4 of Sir R. Campbell's telegram.

Repeated to Belgrade, Athens and Bucharest.

No. 607

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax

(Received May 24, 6.0 p.m.)

No. 176 Telegraphic [C 7589/54/18]

WARSAW, May 24, 1939, 3.39 p.m.

(Your tel. No. 169).¹

Before approaching M. Beck I venture to put forward following considerations:

1. The recent incident at Danzig does not seem likely to develop seriously, and question of a Commission of Emergency [*sic* ? emergency Commission of Enquiry] with which Scandinavian States might be associated hardly arises in this connexion.

2. But some incidents with graver consequences are always possible and it would really be advisable to endeavour to anticipate such a situation.

3. Mediation of Scandinavian States in endeavour to secure a truce is open to the objection that it might look like an attempt to arbitrate. As I have suggested in my telegram No. 172² and my despatch No. 132,³ present period of tension does not seem suitable for seeking a radical solution especially considering the wide gap between German demands and what Poland would be prepared to offer.

4. I fear anything savouring of mediation might be unacceptable to Polish Government as suggestive of weakness and because they have little confidence that German Government really desire a solution which would not radically impair Poland's moral and material strength.

5. The best temporary emollient still seems to me to be declaration of acceptance of the *status quo* for the time being as suggested in my above mentioned telegram. Problem is to find some disinterested but authoritative person to suggest this to both sides. Possibly High Commissioner might be

¹ The reference was omitted from this telegram, but it was suggested in the Foreign Office that it should be to No. 596.

² No. 584.

³ No. 540.

a suitable vehicle for putting forward this limited suggestion both in Warsaw and Berlin.

6. I am not approaching M. Beck pending further elucidation of your views.

Repeated to Berlin.

No. 608

Viscount Halifax to Sir W. Seeds (Moscow) and Sir E. Phipps (Paris)
No. 116¹ Telegraphic [C 7615/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 24, 1939, 5.0 p.m.

The Prime Minister made the following statement in the House of Commons this afternoon:—

‘The House is aware that my Noble Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs was able to have conversations with the French Ministers in Paris on his way to Geneva. He was also able to continue in Geneva the conversations which had been conducted with the Soviet Ambassador in London.

‘As a result of these conversations all relevant points of view have now been made clear and I have every reason to hope that as a result of proposals which His Majesty’s Government are now in a position to make on the main questions arising, it will be found possible to reach full agreement at an early date.

‘There still remain some further points to be cleared up, but I do not anticipate that these are likely to give rise to any serious difficulty’.²

Repeated to Berlin, Warsaw, Bucharest, Riga, Helsingfors, Angora, Rome, Athens, Washington and Tokyo.

¹ No. 116 to Moscow, No. 205 to Paris.

² See Parl. Deb., 5th Ser., H. of C., vol. 347, col. 2267.

No. 609

Viscount Halifax to Sir W. Seeds (Moscow)
No. 117 Telegraphic [C 7599/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 24, 1939, 9.0 p.m.

My telegram No. 111.¹

His Majesty’s Government, after careful consideration, are now disposed to agree that effective co-operation between the Soviet, French and British Governments against aggression in Europe might be based on a system of mutual guarantees in general conformity with the principles of the League of Nations. This would have to cover both direct attack on any of the three Governments by a European State and the case where any of them was

¹ No. 554.

engaged in hostilities with such a State in consequence of aggression by the latter upon another European country. The conditions of this last-named eventuality will have to be carefully worked out.

2. Prime Minister made short statement in Parliament this afternoon² indicating that he had every reason to hope that as a result of proposals which His Majesty's Government are now in a position to make on main questions arising, it will be found possible to reach full agreement at an early date, though there remain some further points to be cleared up. Text of his statement was communicated to Soviet Embassy here before issue.

3. Please inform Soviet Government of above, and tell them I hope to telegraph shortly outline of a formula which would give effect to principles indicated above.

Repeated to Geneva, Paris and Angora.

² See No. 608.

No. 610

Viscount Halifax to Mr. Orde (Riga), and Mr. Snow (Helsingfors)

No. 21¹ Telegraphic [C 7599/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 24, 1939, 11.30 p.m.*

His Majesty's Government, after careful consideration, are now disposed to agree that effective co-operation between the Soviet, French and British Governments against aggression in Europe might be based on a system of mutual guarantees in general conformity with the principles of the League of Nations. This would have to cover both direct attack on any of the three Governments by a European State and the case where any of them was engaged in hostilities with such a State in consequence of aggression by the latter upon another European country.

2. You will have received text of statement made by Prime Minister in Parliament this afternoon.² We hope shortly to draft formula, giving effect to principles indicated above, for submission to Soviet Government.

3. In drafting this formula we shall have particular regard for susceptibilities of the Baltic States, and we consider this might be done by making basis for assisting such States a request made by them for assistance in resisting violation of their neutrality.

4. Please inform Latvian and Estonian Governments (Government to which you are accredited).³

5. There would be no idea of inserting in the formula any unsolicited guarantee of Baltic States, who would not be mentioned by name.

6. (*To Riga only.*) For your own information I would add that this idea about neutrality was given to me as a personal suggestion by M. Munters.

¹ No. 21 to Riga, No. 33 to Helsingfors.

² See No. 608.

³ H.M. Minister at Riga was accredited to Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Tallinn and Kovno were consular posts.

No. 611

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) and Sir R. Hoare (Bucharest)
No. 176¹ Telegraphic [C 7524/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 24, 1939, 11.30 p.m.

Your telegram No. 173² (223³).

1. Please convey to Minister for Foreign Affairs my appreciation of his message, which has proved helpful.

2. We are, as I hope he realises, determined to have regard to the position of the Polish (Roumanian) Government, but we have come to the conclusion, after the most careful consideration, that effective co-operation against aggression in Europe must be linked with a system of mutual guarantees between the British, French and Soviet Governments in general conformity with the principles of the League of Nations, and we are convinced that this can be done without exposing Poland (Roumania) to the difficulties to which Polish (Roumanian) Government have drawn our attention. Such arrangement would have to cover both direct attack on any of the three Governments by a European State and the case where any one of them was engaged in hostilities with such a State in consequence of aggression by the latter upon another European country. The conditions of this last-named eventuality will have to be carefully worked out.

3. You will have received by telegram text of statement made by Prime Minister in Parliament this afternoon.⁴

4. We hope to submit very shortly to Soviet Government outline of a formula which will give effect to principles indicated above. This formula will be telegraphed simultaneously to you for communication to Polish (Roumanian) Government.

(*To Warsaw only.*) 5. We are bearing in mind the particular points raised by M. Beck as reported in your telegram No. 173. There would be political objections here to [? reversing] the order of the two contingencies, but I understand M. Beck does not attach very great importance to this.

¹ No. 176 to Warsaw, No. 243 to Bucharest.

² No. 586.

³ No. 595.

⁴ See No. 608.

No. 612

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)
No. 223 Saving: Telegraphic [C 7599/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 24, 1939

My telegram to Moscow No. 117.¹

Please inform French Government and tell them that we will of course communicate the formula to them and seek their concurrence before submitting it to the Soviet Government.

¹ No. 609.

No. 613

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 25)

No. 211 Saving: Telegraphic [C 7669/15/18]

BERLIN, May 24, 1939

In a speech delivered yesterday on the occasion of opening of a new air raid precaution school at Wannsee near Berlin Field-Marshal Göring made it clear that he has adopted at least outwardly Propaganda Ministry's theory of encirclement of Germany and is no whit behind his colleague as a supporter of Axis.

He said he hoped that air raid precautions would never have to be put into serious practice for Germany desired peace. She did not however desire a peace in the sense of a meaningless phrase as preached by so many in the world today. The world around Germany, he said, was at work to encircle Germany and Italy. The attempt was being made to link together people after people, nation after nation, and power after power in order to be able to attack with the help of the entire world the much hated alliance between National Socialism and Fascism. The world begrudged Germany everything, but now a strong nation had again arisen in the middle of Europe and a second strong nation was indissolubly bound to Germany. Both peoples were young and both peoples were determined to stand up in all circumstances for their vital rights and to maintain them. The Field-Marshal concluded as follows:

'The Pact concluded yesterday¹ is not to be compared with the pacts and alliances of the past. The Pact signed yesterday is a community of fate for all time. May this great event contribute towards the maintenance of peace'.
Repeated to Rome.

¹ The Italo-German 'Pact of Steel' signed in Berlin on May 22.

No. 614

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 25)

No. 212 Saving: Telegraphic [R 4347/661/67]

BERLIN, May 24, 1939

My telegram No. 184 Saving.¹

In further comment on the Anglo-Turkish Agreement the 'Völkischer Beobachter' of May 24 is at pains to prove that Turkey in concluding the agreement had renounced the principle of neutrality and had thereby violated the very foundation upon which the existence of the Balkan Entente rested.

The Balkan Entente, it is pointed out, had originally had for its aim the

¹ Not printed. This telegram of May 13 reported an article in the 'Völkischer Beobachter' attacking the Anglo-Turkish Agreement as 'a further example of British encirclement policy'.

maintenance of the *status quo* and was thus directed against Bulgarian demands for revision. The far-sighted initiative of King Alexander of Yugoslavia, however, which led to the establishment of friendly Bulgarian-Yugoslav relations and the collapse of M. Titulescu's anti-German policy, had changed the course of Bulgarian policy and, while opening possibilities for friendly co-operation with Bulgaria, had convinced the countries in question that the basis for the existence of the Entente lay in the maintenance of strictest neutrality on the part of all its members.

M. Gafencu and M. Cinkar-Markovic, it is pointed out, had already expressed alarm at the conclusion of the Anglo-Turkish Agreement and the proposal had already been made to form a new Entente of the Balkan States which would probably include Bulgaria and Albania. The final decision of the Balkan States would be guided, in the writer's opinion, by the realisation, firstly, that Great Britain, by means of the Turkish Agreement, intended to gain a hold via Turkey over the other members of the Entente. And secondly, that the problem of the Dardanelles had now become a Balkan problem and that the question had thereby been raised as to whether Yugoslavia, Roumania and Greece could continue to be interested in guaranteeing the European territory of Turkey.

No. 615

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora)

No. 289 [C 7529/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 24, 1939*

Sir,

In the course of his interview with Sir Alexander Cadogan on May 19 the Turkish Ambassador referred to the information which the Turkish Ambassador in Moscow had recently given to his Government and which he understood had also been passed on to you.

2. Sir Alexander Cadogan said that it was true that we had the day before received a telegram¹ from Your Excellency reproducing this information. M. Aras continued that President İnönü had outlined to him a suggestion which he understood was based on something that the Turkish Ambassador in Moscow had said to him. The suggestion was that, if His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom felt unable to accept the Soviet idea of a Triple Pact, they might agree to a French-Soviet-British-Turkish 'Declaration of Solidarity against aggression'. By this instrument the Four Powers would declare that they were opposed to aggression and would use all diplomatic and other means at their disposal to try to bring about peaceful settlement of all disputes that might arise. In the event of an act of aggression taking place, they would bind themselves at once to consult as to the measures that each of them might take to resist the aggression. Poland might be added as a fifth party to this declaration.

¹ No. 535.

3. Sir Alexander told M. Aras that this was a very interesting suggestion. At first sight it seems to him, however, that a declaration which did not in fact amount to more than a consultative pact might not, in present circumstances, be considered to meet the case. He felt that the Soviet Government might not regard it as acceptable.

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

No. 616

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 8)

No. 603 E [C 8149/32/18]

BERLIN, May 24, 1939

My Lord,

I have the honour to transmit to Your Lordship herewith the Annual Economic and Financial Report on Germany for 1938.¹

2. In many ways the developments described therein are more serious, because more inexorable, in their results than even the epoch-making political events of last year. The report shows Germany heading with a kind of demoniac persistence for her autarchic goal, but—what is much graver—it shows her to be so far embarked along her chosen course that retreat is scarcely conceivable. Whatever the roseate figments of Dr. Schacht's, or for that matter Dr. Funk's, imagination, an easy or speedy return by Germany to free currency and economic co-operation seems now to have receded out of the domain of practical politics. The degree of autarchy implied by the Four-Year Plan must be achieved or the Nazi experiment must perish in the attempt. But for even the Four-Year Plan to succeed—complete autarchy is demonstrably impossible—Germany must broaden the base of her economy; in particular, her foreign trade must expand.

3. The incorporation of Austria and Czecho-Slovakia has added to the industrial superstructure, but has done nothing to solve the raw material and other economic problems; in fact, these political 'successes' have aggravated the complexity of economic difficulty. The application of the German economic strait-jacket to the new territories has destroyed the remunerative elements represented by existing organisation, especially export trade and the tourist traffic in Austria and the Sudetenland, and there is still only a comparatively remote prospect of these territories acquiring positive economic value to the Reich economy. The ruthless elimination of Jews from economic life in the new territory as well as in Germany proper has also reduced, for the time being at least, the economic assets of the Reich. Feverish efforts are being made to control the economies of the Danubian States, and so to secure a balanced 'Lebensraum', but at bottom everyone feels that such success as may attend these efforts will only be a palliative, and that sooner or later further

¹ Not printed.

territorial expansion will be necessary. The shadow of war, it is now realised, overhangs the prospect of such expansion.

4. The Chancellor is faced with a fatal dilemma and, what is more, a dilemma with a time-limit: either he must accept some modification of the autarchic tendency, encourage exports, slacken arms production, and hope for a settlement with Great Britain which will give him not only colonies, but also economic collaboration in many fields where Germany will need it if disaster is to be avoided, or he must risk the supreme throw of a war, the prospects of which are daily becoming less attractive. He must make his choice apparently while his dwindling stock of foreign exchange still enables him to keep the wheels of his titanic machine in motion. Superficially, the first alternative does not seem to present any fatal difficulty; in fact, however, any attempt to change the pattern of German economy at the present moment would be full of danger. It must involve initially a good deal of unemployment, and that in the present state of internal tension might well prove the last straw. Moreover, there is no doubt that Hitler himself, having started the armament race, must have strong fears that advantage would be taken by his enemies of any slackening. Finally, prestige is so overwhelming a factor for the régime that it is very difficult to conceive its conducting the measure of retreat involved.

5. In the circumstances, I would hazard the prophecy that the Chancellor will show his humanity to the extent of shirking the dilemma as long as he possibly can. He has always avoided war before, and he certainly hopes, if desperately, to avoid it now. Disaster has been confidently and constantly predicted for the Nazi economic régime, and yet after six years it still moves. The pressure is, however, now so great that it is fair to entertain the foreboding that only a conjunction of willingness on the part of Hitler to retreat from the full Nazi programme and willingness on the part of those nations whose confidence he has forfeited to help Germany over the extremely critical stage which any peaceful interruption of her present economic policy must entail will prevent the Chancellor from having to seek a desperate solution to the problem of continuing his rule by taking the risk of a general war.

I have, &c.,

NEVILLE HENDERSON

No. 617

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 3)

No. 610 [C 7938/54/18]

BERLIN, May 24, 1939

My Lord,

I have the honour to inform Your Lordship that I had occasion yesterday to have a brief talk with Herr von Papen. He did not conceal the fact that, though he had, as he said, a number of what he called old friends in Turkey, he was not enjoying himself at Angora. He complained, *inter alia*, of the food

there but added that, as a daily air service was being started next month between Berlin and Angora, he would be able to overcome that difficulty. Presumably from his own estates, as the food position at Berlin itself is far from satisfactory.

2. To me also, as to the Military Attaché to His Majesty's Embassy at Angora (see Sir Hughe Knatchbull-Hugessen's despatch No. 270¹ of May 18) the Ambassador referred to the 'interesting' correspondence in 'The Times' which had followed the publication of Lord Rushcliffe's letter therein.² In that connexion he professed to be unable to understand His Majesty's Government's policy of 'encirclement'. I said that I was surprised that a politician of his experience should accept such a catchword in respect of a policy whose sole and publicly avowed object was, as he must realise, simply resistance to the imposition of solutions by force. It was a policy which had been forced upon us by what I described, in Germany's own interests, as the ill-advised action of the German Government on March 15 last and I spoke in the sense of your telegram No. 150³ to me. Herr von Papen could find no justification of that action except to ask why the Czechs, after Munich, had kept 40 divisions in being. I told him that while they might have had equipment for 40 divisions, they certainly had not kept them in being. The proceedings of March 15 had clearly proved how impossible it was for the Czechs to be a real menace to Germany which, had she wished, could easily have come to some peaceful arrangement with Prague about the size of the Czech army without proceeding to the forcible annexation of the two Provinces.

3. Except for his allusion to the forty Czech divisions, Herr von Papen made no attempt to justify the Prague *coup* but confined himself to asking what was now to be done about Danzig. I told him that, in my opinion, the first necessity was a period of truce to enable stock to be taken of the situation in a calmer frame of mind on both sides. The Ambassador said that he could guarantee that such was the present policy of the German Government. I replied to His Excellency that, while such might be Hitler's policy, I was nevertheless uneasy. The extreme party leaders were not addicted to patience and might at any moment try to force Hitler's hand by engineering some incident which could not be quietly ignored. Herr von Papen admitted that the Führer was now so isolated that he often refused altogether to listen to what was happening around him lest external events should interfere with his solitary meditation over high policy, but he nevertheless repeated with the utmost assurance that he could guarantee that Hitler would see to it that a pause of some months was observed.

4. A copy of this despatch has been sent to His Majesty's Representatives at Warsaw and Angora.

I have, &c.,

NEVILLE HENDERSON

¹ No. 551.

² In a letter printed in 'The Times' of May 3 Lord Rushcliffe had advocated an international conference to discuss (i) Danzig and the Corridor, (ii) Italian claims against France, and (iii) Germany's colonial claims, as the only hope of avoiding war.

³ No. 431.

Sir R. Campbell (Belgrade) to Viscount Halifax
(Received May 25, 4.30 p.m.)
No. 120 Telegraphic [R 4382/661/67]

BELGRADE, May 25, 1939, 1.50 p.m.

My telegram No. 115,¹ last paragraph.

My Roumanian colleague has given the following account of meeting between Yugoslav and Roumanian Ministers for Foreign Affairs at which he was present:

Italy.

2. M. Markovitch gave M. Gafencu account of Prince Regent's visit to Rome which did not differ substantially from that given in my telegram No. 114.² M. Markovitch gave categorical assurance that no commitment had been assumed by Yugoslavia and that visit had introduced no change in situation.

Anglo-Turkish Declaration.

3. The two Ministers for Foreign Affairs agreed that Declaration was to be welcomed from point of view of security in Mediterranean. As regards passage relating to Balkan security they agreed that this constituted a proposition which must be elucidated. It was decided that this should be done by M. Gafencu when he visits Angora on June 12 after which there would be further consultation between Belgrade and Bucharest. It was agreed that there was no occasion to summon special meeting of Balkan Entente.

Balkan Entente.

4. The two Ministers for Foreign Affairs reaffirmed their Governments' attachment to the Entente and intention of working in harmony with its general aims inside the Balkans. As regards policy of Entente in wider European affairs it was agreed that whilst neither country would join any *bloc*, policy of Entente as a whole should run parallel with efforts of those Powers whose aim is maintenance of peace.

5. In general M. Markovitch appeared to have recovered his composure and (presumably because Rome visit was over) seemed less nervous about repercussions of Declaration on Yugoslavia. My Roumanian colleague shares my view that they do in fact welcome it although they cannot say so openly.

Repeated to Bucharest, Angora and Athens.

¹ No. 555.

² No. 544.

No. 619

Sir R. Campbell (Belgrade) to Viscount Halifax
(Received May 25, 4.0 p.m.)
No. 121 Telegraphic [R 4386/661/67]

BELGRADE, May 25, 1939, 1.55 p.m.

My telegram No. 120.¹

I gathered that decision to pursue enquiries at Angora in a leisurely manner was actuated in part at least by desire not to embarrass Prince Regent during his visit to Berlin.

2. That being so, it might be well (contrary to suggestions made in paragraph 4 of my telegram No. 115²) to take no action beyond that reported in paragraph 4 of Angora telegram No. 243³ in the direction of urging Turkish Government to give further explanations at this stage.

Repeated to Angora, Athens and Bucharest.

¹ No. 618.

² No. 555.

³ No. 606.

No. 620

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax
(Received May 25, 4.30 p.m.)
No. 177 Telegraphic [C 7666/3356/18]

WARSAW, May 25, 1939, 2.48 p.m.

Counsellor conveyed relevant parts of your telegram No. 176¹ to M. Beck's Chef de Cabinet today. M. Lubinski after consulting Minister for Foreign Affairs said that M. Beck attached real importance from Poland's point of view to the inversion of the order of the contingencies named in paragraph 4 (b) of your telegram No. 165.² It was difficult in any case for the Polish Government to appear to admit that Polish relations with U.S.S.R. were the subject of arrangements made by third Powers.

2. He gave the impression that public attitude of the Polish Government to the proposed mutual guarantees between France, Great Britain and the U.S.S.R. would be influenced by the precise wording of the formula and even by such considerations as the one to which M. Beck has drawn attention.

3. I venture to hope that this point may be reconsidered. I should in any case be glad to learn what are the 'political objections to the order of the two contingencies' mentioned in last paragraph of your telegram under reference.

Repeated to Moscow.

¹ No. 611.

² No. 556.

No. 621

United Kingdom Delegation (Geneva) to Viscount Halifax
(Received May 25, 6.15 p.m.)
No. 16 Telegraphic [C 7671/3356/18]

GENEVA, May 25, 1939, 5.10 p.m.

Your telegram No. 13.¹

I² communicated information to M. Maisky this morning in the form of a memorandum. He said he thought agreement should now prove possible and asked me to thank you. He looked forward to meeting you on his return to London.

¹ This telegram repeated to Geneva telegram No. 117 to Moscow (No. 609).

² After Lord Halifax's return to London Mr. Butler was leading the United Kingdom Delegation at Geneva.

No. 622

Viscount Halifax to Sir W. Seeds (Moscow)
No. 118 Telegraphic [C 7661/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 25, 1939, 6.45 p.m.

My telegram No. 117.¹

1. My immediately following telegrams² contain the text of a draft agreement and an explanatory memorandum.

2. These are being communicated in the first instance to the French Government, with the suggestion that the agreement should be submitted to the Soviet Government jointly by yourself and your French colleague.

3. In the meantime the draft agreement and the memorandum are being sent to you only for your information and to save time in the event of my having to instruct you to act at short notice.

¹ No. 609.

² Nos. 624-5.

No. 623

Sir W. Seeds (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax
(Received May 25, 7.30 p.m.)
No. 100 Telegraphic [C 7668/3356/18]

MOSCOW, May 25, 1939, 7.35 p.m.

Your telegram No. 117.¹

I gave message this afternoon to M. Potemkin who promised to inform Soviet Government immediately. He made no comment beyond wondering what precisely was implied by reference to League of Nations principles.

¹ No. 609.

Viscount Halifax to Sir W. Seeds (Moscow)

No. 119 Telegraphic [C 7661/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 25, 1939, 10.30 p.m.*

The Governments of the United Kingdom, France and the U.S.S.R. desiring to give effect, in their capacity of Members of the League of Nations, to the principle of mutual support against aggression which is embodied in the Covenant of the League, have reached the following agreement:

I

If France and the United Kingdom are engaged in hostilities with a European Power, in consequence of either (1) aggression by that Power against another European State which they had, in conformity with the wishes of that State, undertaken to assist against such aggression, (2) assistance given by them to another European State which had requested such assistance in order to resist a violation of its neutrality, or (3) aggression by a European Power against either France or the United Kingdom, the U.S.S.R., acting in accordance with the principles of Article 16, paragraphs 1 and 2, of the Covenant of the League of Nations, will give France and the United Kingdom all the support and assistance in its power.

II

If the U.S.S.R. is engaged in hostilities with a European Power, in consequence of either (1) aggression by that Power against another European State which the U.S.S.R. had, in conformity with the wishes of that State, undertaken to assist against such aggression, (2) assistance given by the U.S.S.R. to another European State which had requested such assistance in order to resist a violation of its neutrality, or (3) aggression by a European Power against the U.S.S.R., France and the United Kingdom, acting in accordance with the principles of Article 16, paragraphs 1 and 2, of the Covenant of the League of Nations, will give the U.S.S.R. all the support and assistance in their power.

III

The three Governments will concert together as to the methods by which such mutual support and assistance could, in case of need, be made most effective.

IV

In the event of circumstances arising which threatens to call their undertakings of mutual support and assistance into operation, the three Governments will immediately consult together upon the situation.

The methods and scope of such consultation will at once be the subject of further discussion between the three Governments.

V

It is understood that the rendering of support and assistance in the above cases is without prejudice to the rights and position of other Powers.

VI

The three Governments will communicate to each other the terms of any undertakings referred to in I (1) and II (1) above which they have already given. Any of them which may in future be considering the giving of such an undertaking will consult the other two Governments before doing so, and will communicate to them the terms of any undertaking so given.

VII

This agreement will continue for a period of (5) years from today's date. Not less than (6 months) before the expiry of the said period, the three Governments will consult together as to the desirability of renewing it, with or without modifications.¹

¹ Copies of the draft as printed above, and the accompanying memorandum (No. 625) were communicated to the French Ambassador on May 25.

No. 625

Viscount Halifax to Sir W. Seeds (Moscow)
No. 120 Telegraphic [C 7661/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 25, 1939, 10.30 p.m.

1. His Majesty's Government consider it important from the point of view of public opinion in this country that the Pact should be connected in some way with the position of the parties as Members of the League of Nations. On the other hand, it is obviously impossible in existing circumstances to make the operation of the Pact dependent on the application of Article 16 by the League, especially as, Germany and Italy not being Members of the League, the League machinery could only be set in motion by the application of Article 17, a course which it might be impossible to follow. It is moreover important to prevent any fears on the part of other countries that an attempt is being made to involve them, either generally under Article 16 or particularly under the provision in paragraph 3 of that Article about affording passage through their territory to the forces of Members of the League. For these reasons the Covenant is mentioned both in the Preamble and in Articles I and II only by a reference to its principles, and the references to Article 16 of the Covenant mention only paragraphs 1 and 2 of that Article.

2. Paragraphs I and II have been drafted in order to meet so far as possible the susceptibilities of Poland, Roumania and the Baltic States, and the provision in I (2) and II (2) results from a personal suggestion made by M. Munters. The idea is that (1) in each of these articles covers the case (Poland, Roumania, Belgium, Greece, Turkey) where one of the parties had previously given an undertaking of assistance to the country concerned with

its assent, while (2) covers the case (e.g. Baltic States, Holland, Switzerland) where no such assurance had been previously given, but where the country concerned asked for assistance in resisting a violation of its neutrality. Paragraph VI is intended, in conjunction with the words 'in conformity with the wishes of that State' in paragraphs I and II, to prevent fears that the Soviet Union might give guarantees to countries which do not desire them.

3. It will be observed that now that the Pact has been made entirely reciprocal, it makes no difference from the Franco-British point of view whether the Soviet Union give undertakings to Poland and Roumania or not, because in the event of France and Great Britain being engaged in hostilities in consequence of their undertakings to Poland or Roumania the Soviet Union would under paragraph I be bound to come to their assistance.

4. The object of paragraph V is to indicate that the obligations of mutual assistance do not involve making use of the territory of other Powers without their consent.

No. 626

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax
(Received May 26, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 249 Telegraphic [R 4371/661/67]

ANGORA, May 25, 1939, 10.40 p.m.

My telegram No. 243.¹

Minister for Foreign Affairs read to me on May 25 report of a conversation between Yugoslavian and Roumanian Ministers for Foreign Affairs. He is sending me a copy in confidence and I will telegraph a summary in my immediately following telegram.²

2. Briefly Yugoslavia maintains recent attitude viz. that Anglo-Turkish Agreement was contrary to the Balkan Entente, that Yugoslav Government had not been kept informed (thereof).

3. General result of conversation has been that Roumanian Ambassador here has been instructed to point out that his Government accepts the Agreement as far as it goes but urges that it should not be carried further. This applies especially to clause 6 of the Anglo-Turkish Declaration concerning the Balkans.

4. Minister for Foreign Affairs concludes that both Yugoslav and Roumanian Governments are nervous as to German reactions and that Yugoslav Minister for Foreign Affairs in particular is thoroughly apprehensive regarding his forthcoming visit to Berlin. Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs is replying that in any case no progress will be made in Anglo-Turkish negotiations before June 1 which is the date of Yugoslav visit to Berlin. Minister for Foreign Affairs thinks it may be possible for M. Markovitch to shelter himself behind this assurance while in Berlin.

5. Apart from this Minister for Foreign Affairs tells me he has no intention of being influenced by Roumanian representations. He proposes to discuss

¹ No. 606.

² No. 633.

the whole matter with Gafencu when he comes to Angora. Minister for Foreign Affairs tells me he is greatly surprised at the tone of conversations between Markovitch and Gafencu. He attributes Roumanian *démarche* to fright.

6. Meanwhile Minister for Foreign Affairs presses me for a rapid continuance of our negotiations.

7. After the action reported in paragraph 4 of my telegram No. 243 Minister for Foreign Affairs sent a telegram to Belgrade designed to allay . . .³ and anxiety.

Repeated to Belgrade, Athens and Bucharest.

³ The text is here uncertain.

No. 627

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora)

No. 208 Telegraphic [R 4322/661/67]

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 25, 1939, 11.0 p.m.

Your telegram No. 238.¹

Following from Sir O. Sargent.

We have prepared a draft for the interim understanding and hope to telegraph it to you when finally approved early next week. There has been inevitable delay due to absence of Secretary of State at Geneva, to pressure of work in connexion with negotiations with the U.S.S.R. and to the Whitsuntide holidays. If the Turkish Government show impatience I hope you will be able to reassure them.

¹ No. 549.

No. 628

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw)

No. 179 Telegraphic [C 7589/54/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 25, 1939, 11.30 p.m.

Geneva telegram No. 14¹ and your telegram No. 176,² paragraph 5.

2. I asked M. Burckhardt in Geneva whether he could not help to bring the Polish and German Governments to the point of negotiation over Danzig. Negotiations were not possible at the moment, but it might be useful to think out now some of the lines on which they might be conducted in the future, if a *détente* could be established. M. Burckhardt agreed that the present moment was not propitious for negotiations, and if he returned to Danzig it would be for the purpose of rendering general service if possible in the interests of a *détente*. Please endeavour to see M. Burckhardt when he comes to Warsaw and encourage him to use his best endeavours in this direction

¹ Not printed. This telegram reported the possible date of M. Burckhardt's departure for Warsaw.

² No. 607.

You might also obtain his views on the suggestion in paragraph 5 of your telegram No. 172.³

Repeated to Berlin.

³ No. 584.

No. 629

Letter from the French Ambassador to Sir A. Cadogan (Received May 25)

[C 7848/3356/18]

AMBASSADE DE FRANCE, A LONDRES, 25 mai 1939

Cher Sir Alexander,

M. Georges Bonnet m'a prié de signaler à Lord Halifax que lorsque le projet d'accord tripartite aura été communiqué et approuvé à Paris, il conviendrait à son avis que le Gouvernement français le soumette à Moscou au même titre que le Gouvernement britannique. Il se propose donc d'en faire part à M. Souritz, Ambassadeur de l'U.R.S.S. à Paris, et qui est chargé de suivre les négociations, dès qu'il sera avisé que Sir William Seeds a reçu l'instruction de remettre le texte au Commissaire soviétique des Affaires Etrangères.

Voulez-vous me faire savoir par le téléphone si Lord Halifax est d'accord sur ce point?

D'autre part, comme suite à l'entretien¹ que j'ai eu récemment avec vous au sujet des puits de pétrole roumains, j'ai reçu l'instruction de vous signaler l'intérêt que nous verrions à ce que le Secrétariat Général du Conseil Supérieur de la Défense Nationale, qui a également procédé à une étude technique de la question, fût mis en mesure de participer aux conversations qui pourraient avoir lieu entre l'expert roumain et le représentant du War Office si ces conversations doivent avoir lieu comme vous me l'aviez indiqué à Paris.

Croyez, cher Sir Alexander, à l'expression de mes sentiments cordialement dévoués.

CH. CORBIN

¹ On April 20 the French Ambassador had expressed to Sir A. Cadogan the preoccupation of his Government with the question of the destruction of the Roumanian oilfields (as in 1916) in the event of a German invasion of the country. He was informed that steps had been taken to get into touch with an official of an oil company in Roumania in this connexion.

No. 630

Letter from Sir A. Cadogan to the French Ambassador

[C 7697/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 25, 1939

My dear Ambassador,

On receipt of your letter of today¹ I spoke to the Secretary of State, who readily accepts the idea that when our two Governments are agreed on the

¹ No. 629.

formula of the Tripartite Agreement we should put it forward jointly to the Soviet Government.

For our part we shall do this through our Ambassador in Moscow, and Lord Halifax would suggest therefore that it might be well for the French Government to instruct their Ambassador in Moscow to make a joint *démarche* with his British colleague. If the French Government desired it, they could of course at the same time communicate the formula to the Soviet Ambassador in Paris.

As regards the latter part of your letter, concerning the Roumanian oil-fields, I will communicate with Your Excellency further.²

Believe me, &c.,

ALEXANDER CADOGAN

² No further correspondence appears to have passed between the Foreign Office and the French Ambassador on this subject.

No. 631

Letter from Mr. Kirkpatrick to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)

[C 7772/54/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 25, 1939

I am sending you herewith 6 copies of the White Paper on Czechoslovakia.¹ As you say, the letter from Hitler to the Prime Minister of September 27 definitely establishes the breach of faith of which the man in the street in Germany is naturally quite ignorant.

As regards Danzig, the general view—both in the Office and in the House of Commons—is that although Hitler has a grievance, it is largely self-created. The situation, as seen from here, is roughly this. In September, both in a public speech and in conversation with the Prime Minister, Herr Hitler gave a categorical assurance that if the Sudeten Germans were returned to the Reich, he would have no further territorial demands to make in Europe. Within six months he broke his word by the annexation of Bohemia and Moravia. Not only that, but simultaneously he made further territorial demands on Poland, in violation of the September promise. But this was not all: when the Poles did not accept this demand, he maintained that it could not be repeated and that his demands henceforth must be more extensive and more onerous, although he was careful not to define them.

For five years Hitler maintained that his 10-year agreement with Poland was a contribution to European peace, and that there was no reason why the questions of Danzig and the Corridor should disturb German-Polish relations. Then, suddenly (before any question of the British guarantee or of Polish relations with any other country arose), in violation of a solemn pledge, he presents territorial demands to Poland and requires their immediate acceptance without any negotiation, and in default of immediate acceptance claims that he must raise his demands.

¹ Cmd. 5847 of 1938. See No. 605.

Seen from this angle, the view here is that Hitler cannot be said to be 'in the right' over Danzig. Moreover, in view of the flagrant breach of his September undertakings, the Poles are thought to be justified in suspecting that Hitler's demands would not end with Danzig and the corridor through the Corridor.

You ask if the Foreign Office or His Majesty's Government have any views as to the right solution of the Danzig question. I think there is a general disposition to agree with the Roumanian Foreign Minister that if Danzig were to be restored to Germany in virtue of the right of self-determination, Hitler should be required to evacuate Prague.² But this, of course, is not a practical proposition, and the fact is recognised here. A solution which would, I think, receive approval here would be one whereby Danzig became a free de-militarised city, with its foreign relations possibly even under German control. If this solution were adopted, the inhabitants of Danzig would surely have nothing to grumble about, and there would be no military menace to Poland. Nor is there any reason why, if Hitler is sincere, he should want more. After all, in the interests of his foreign relations he has definitely renounced the Tyrol and denied to the Tyrolese their right of self-determination. We should not be asking him to make this sacrifice in respect of Danzig, but merely to refrain from fortifying the zone and incorporating it in the Reich.

But these are my private views only, and I cannot say whether they would be shared by the Secretary of State or No. 10.³

² See No. 278.

³ Sir A. Cadogan approved of Mr. Kirkpatrick's reply to Sir N. Henderson.

No. 632

Viscount Halifax to Mr. Osborne (The Vatican)

No. 18 Telegraphic [R 4423/6/22]

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 26, 1939, 5.15 p.m.

My telegram No. 15.¹

I trust that the Pope has not been discouraged by the preliminary reactions of various countries to his project. The whole policy of His Majesty's Government at this moment is directed towards reducing the present tension so as to admit of negotiations taking place later.

2. The principal danger at the moment remains the situation in Danzig and its effect upon relations between Germany and Poland. As stated in my telegram under reference, the enquiries I made in Paris and Warsaw indicated that the line of progress which offered the most immediate hope of improvement lay in any assistance which His Holiness could give in assisting German-Polish negotiations on questions outstanding between these two Governments. Is it your opinion that there is anything which the Pope could do along these lines? It might be that use could be made of the General of the Jesuits, being a Pole.

¹ No. 487.

3. It is probable that present atmosphere is not such as to permit any immediate prospect of negotiation, and if so, our immediate objection² must be limited to securing that both sides agree to respect the *status quo* for a given period, as long as possible in order to give time for atmosphere to cool down. But sooner or later an effort must be made to find a permanent solution and I should be glad to feel that His Holiness, while holding himself in readiness to do anything possible to restrain both sides in event of acute crisis suddenly arising, was also considering the terms of an agreement which he could at an appropriate moment urge on both sides. His Majesty's Government would at all times be willing to lend any assistance to this end that might seem likely to be useful.

² In the telegram as drafted, this word read 'objective'.

No. 633

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax
(Received May 27, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 250 Telegraphic [R 4393/661/67]

ANGORA, May 26, 1939, 6.0 p.m.

My telegram No. 249,¹ paragraph 1.

I have now received document referred to, which is in the form of a memorandum for Roumanian Ambassador here to . . .² It gives the following account of conversation at Orsovo.

2. Yugoslav Minister for Foreign Affairs complained that the Turkish Government had concluded an agreement with His Majesty's Government without consulting the Balkan allies. By this agreement one of the Balkan countries is bound to a Great Power which belongs to one of the opposing groups. This conflicts with decisions of the recent Bucharest meeting and with policy of complete independence hitherto followed. It may cause the Axis Powers to exercise pressure, especially on Belgrade and Bucharest, and to enquire whether those Governments intend to remain in a Balkan Entente which has abandoned independence and bound itself to the group opposed to the Axis. Such a request for explanations had already occurred in Rome and would probably be repeated in Berlin. In Rome both Prince Paul and Yugoslav Minister for Foreign Affairs had answered that the Turco-British Agreement in no way modified the complete independence of the Balkan Entente and on their side they had undertaken no engagement which might weaken that policy. Yugoslav Government consider that in order to avoid fresh pressure, Entente Powers should discuss together whether they intend to continue the policy of independence or to join one of the European groups. In the latter case Yugoslavia who is determined not to abandon her policy of neutrality would be unable to render assistance to her allies.

3. In his reply M. Gafencu made the following six points:

(a). Any weakening of the Balkan Entente would be fatal. Solidarity was essential either in the event of a war or an international conference or an

¹ No. 626.

² The text is here uncertain.

exchange of views between the Great Powers as to European reorganization. Yugoslav Minister for Foreign Affairs agreed.

(b). The more the Balkan Entente could demonstrate its independence of the Great Powers the better it would protect itself. In particular it was necessary to avoid the impression of following a policy of hostility to the Axis Powers, of subordination to their direction or of being afraid of pressure from them. M. Markovitch agreed.

(c). As regards Turco-British Agreement they so far only knew the Declaration of May 12. They must distinguish between (1) part of which might have a direct influence on the Balkans [? and (2)].³ As to (1) the part concerning the Mediterranean did not interest them. On the other hand Turkish help in the Mediterranean and the Straits could only be useful. M. Markovitch agreed. As to (2) the extension of Turco-British Agreement might be regarded as a threat to (? continuance)⁴ in (? existence of)⁴ Balkan policy of independence. For this reason Roumanian Minister for Foreign Affairs as President of the Balkan Entente, had requested the Turkish Government to avoid giving the Agreement a form which would conflict with this policy; in consequence the Declaration had only referred to Balkan security in very vague terms. Moreover on May 9 Turkish Secretary-General had assured the Roumanian Ambassador that the text would not allude to the Balkans or the Balkan Entente. M. Gafencu regretted clause 6 of the Declaration but would be satisfied if final agreement contained no new allusions or precisions touching the Balkan Entente.

(d). In consequence Roumanian Ambassador at Angora should urge the fulfilment of the assurance already given that the reference to the Balkans should be avoided in the text of the agreement. M. Gafencu considered that the British and French guarantees of Greece and Roumania, and Turco-British Agreement and the Balkan Pact provided adequate defence system. He had instructed M. Cretzianu, Secretary-General of Roumanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to express these views to the Western Powers at Geneva. Yugoslav Minister for Foreign Affairs agreed and expressed the hope that these representations at Angora would spare him fresh difficulties in Berlin.

(e). M. Gafencu emphasized that his action at Angora was solely designed to strengthen the cohesion of the Balkan Entente.

(f). He also observed that in view of the fact that the interests of the Great Powers in the Balkan Entente was continually increasing and that 'certain of those Powers had themselves become Balkan States', the reciprocal engagements of the Balkan allies should be more closely examined in view of the new danger to which they might be exposed. Yugoslav Minister for Foreign Affairs had replied that he was always ready to discuss this question.

4. Communication ends with a request by the Roumanian Ambassador to be informed whether the Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs is in full agreement with these views and conclusions.

Repeated to Belgrade, Athens and Bucharest.

³ The text here appears to be incomplete.

⁴ The text is here uncertain.

*Viscount Halifax to Sir W. Seeds (Moscow)**No. 123 Telegraphic [C 7661/3356/18]*FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 26, 1939, 6.30 p.m.*My telegram No. 118.¹

French Government are instructing their Chargé d'Affaires in Moscow to collaborate with you² in communicating jointly to the Soviet Government the draft agreement contained in my telegram No. 119³. You should accordingly make this communication with your French colleague as soon as possible.

2. In doing so you may make use verbally as occasion requires of such of the explanations contained in my telegram No. 120⁴ as seem suitable for use with the Soviet Government. (You should not mention that the provision in I (2) and II (2) is the result of a personal suggestion by M. Munters.)

3. You should make it clear to the Soviet Government that, as the text itself shows, the reference in the draft agreement to the Covenant of the League does not in any way mean that action by the League would be necessary in order to bring the obligations of the agreement into force. On the other hand, we have always intended that the definitive agreements embodying our guarantees, whether they be to the Soviet Government, to Poland or to Turkey, should be based upon and should invoke the principles of the League. This is moreover in conformity with the general policy of His Majesty's Government, which I stated in my speech at the League Council on the 23rd instant, when I said that the recent system of guarantees which His Majesty's Government have set up is in strict conformity with the spirit of the League Covenant, and that when the negotiations with which His Majesty's Government are at present engaged are complete an appropriate opportunity will be taken of communicating their result to the League.

4. For the rest, you should point out to the Soviet Government that His Majesty's Government have in the present draft agreement met the three points which according to your telegram No. 93⁵ the Soviet Government considered to be indispensable conditions, although in doing so they have naturally had to take account of the susceptibilities of Russia's neighbours. In particular, the obligations are completely reciprocal, and the Soviet Government receives a guarantee as firm as that given by His Majesty's Government to Poland and Roumania. On the other hand, in order that this reciprocity should be complete the draft agreement provides that the Soviet Government guarantees Great Britain and France in the event not only in the case where they are involved in war as the result of having come to the assistance of a third country to whom they had given an undertaking or who had appealed for assistance, but also in the case of a direct attack on

¹ No. 622.² See No. 640.³ No. 624.⁴ No. 625.⁵ No. 520.

either of them. We have understood that the Soviet Government would not raise any objections to such an extension of their guarantee.⁶

Repeated to Paris, Warsaw, Riga, Helsingfors and Bucharest.

⁶ A summary of this telegram and of No. 635 was communicated to the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs by Sir E. Phipps on May 27.

No. 635

Viscount Halifax to His Majesty's Representatives at Warsaw, Bucharest, Riga, and Helsingfors

No. 182¹ Telegraphic [C 7661/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 26, 1939, 6.30 p.m.

My Intel No. 55² and my telegram No. 123 to Moscow.³

You should inform the Government to which you are accredited (*Riga only*; Latvian and Estonian Governments) of the text of the draft agreement and of the circumstances in which it is being communicated to the Soviet Government. In doing so you may make use verbally as occasion requires of such of the explanations contained in my telegram to Moscow No. 120⁴ as seem suitable for use in the circumstances.

2. You should point out that we have we consider successfully met the wish of the Government to which you are accredited (*Riga only*; Latvian and Estonian Governments) not to be associated with the Soviet Government in the system of guarantees which the British, French and Soviet Governments are undertaking. It is in particular to be noted that any Government desirous of receiving the help of the three signatories of the proposed agreement may, under Article I, obtain this without being compelled for this purpose to accept any guarantee from the Soviet Government or to enter into any undertaking with the latter.

3. Under the proposed agreement assistance would be given only (1) in pursuance of an undertaking previously given in conformity with the wishes of the State concerned, or (2) in consequence of a request by the State concerned for assistance in resisting a violation of its neutrality.

4. Likewise should the Soviet Government wish to give an undertaking such as is referred to in Article II, they will have under Article VI to consult Great Britain and France before doing so.

5. His Majesty's Government hope that these safeguards will completely reassure the Government to which you are accredited (*Riga only*; Latvian and Estonian Governments) and convince them that their liberty of action is in no way prejudiced.

¹ No. 182 to Warsaw, No. 247 to Bucharest, No. 23 to Riga, No. 37 to Helsingfors.

² Not printed. This circular telegram of May 26 repeated to the four above-named posts and thirteen others, including Washington, the text of the proposals contained in telegrams 119 and 120 to Moscow, printed as Nos. 624-5.

³ No. 634.

⁴ No. 625.

(To Warsaw only).

6. In the forthcoming discussions of the proposed draft agreement, His Majesty's Government will not lose sight of M. Beck's wish—as reported in your telegram No. 177⁵—to see the order of contingencies reversed in Articles I and II.

Repeated to Paris and Moscow.

⁵ No. 620.

No. 636

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw)

No. 180 Telegraphic [C 7517/54/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 26, 1939, 7.0 p.m.

Your telegram No. 172.¹

I am glad to observe from last paragraph that you think Polish Government are fully alive to danger of falling into German trap designed to put them in the wrong.

If German Government do plan any *coup* in Danzig, it will very likely be so arranged as suddenly to confront Polish Government with a *fait accompli*, reaction to which would be represented as Polish aggression.

Precipitate reaction by Polish Government would be likely to render war inevitable. If full scale hostilities could be suspended, if only for a period, knowledge that Great Britain, France and, as we hope, Soviet Russia are behind Poland might yet induce German Government to consider reasonable settlement.

If, for instance, Danzig Senate voted union with the Reich and were able to make a display of force, without actually resorting to violence, I should hope it might be possible for Polish Government to hold their hand to give time for us to make it clear to German Government that we should be behind Poland in resisting any forcible or unilateral solution. This warning might be accompanied by certain preparatory military measures on our part.

Such a move might ultimately be unavailing, but it is not clear that a short breathing space would compromise our military position, and it is just conceivable that it might have some effect, by giving time for wiser counsels to prevail. At the worst, it should do something to strengthen our moral position if and when hostilities become unavoidable.

On further consideration, I feel it would be very desirable that you should take early convenient opportunity of returning to the charge and have another talk with M. Beck on the above lines, urging the necessity of consultation before taking irrevocable decision in doubtful cases where Poland might be manœuvred into position of initiating use of force.

Repeated to Berlin.

¹ No. 584.

No. 637

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax

(Received May 27, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 179 Telegraphic [C 7685/3356/18]

WARSAW, May 26, 1939, 8.31 p.m.

Somewhat unfortunate impression has been created here by communiqué of May 25 apparently emanating from Reuter's diplomatic correspondent in London according to which 'well informed quarters' believed Anglo-Franco-Soviet Pact would provide for consultation and action in the event of aggression against any of States 'guaranteed by the three contracting parties', and that such guarantee was the one remaining detail to be discussed.

2. Following is translation P.A.T. communiqué issued today in this connexion, begins:

3. 'Reference to recent article by Reuter's diplomatic correspondent regarding proposals which British Government is said to have made to Soviet Government, it should be observed that the Polish Government have not yet been informed of these. Polish Government will adopt an attitude in this matter as soon as they receive an intimation from competent British source. It is believed at Warsaw news reported by Reuter does not exactly correspond with information on this subject received by Polish Government'. Ends.

Repeated to Moscow.

No. 638

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)

No. 227 Saving: Telegraphic [R 4391/7/22]

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 26, 1939

Rome telegram No. 476.¹

Do you think in the light of Rome telegram under reference that a personal letter from the Prime Minister to M. Daladier would have any chance of inducing him to modify the negative attitude which he adopted in his conversation with me on the May 20 (see Delegation despatch from Geneva No. 29²)?

Repeated to Rome.³

¹ No. 593.

² This despatch (not printed) enclosed that part of the record of Lord Halifax's conversation with MM. Daladier and Bonnet dealing with Franco-Italian relations, printed as No. 570.

³ Sir E. Phipps replied on May 27 that he strongly advised 'waiting till the atmosphere improves and the Italian press ceases its attacks on France'.

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 27)

No. 213 Saving: Telegraphic [C 7681/3778/18]

BERLIN, May 26, 1939

My telegram No. 210 Saving.¹

Publicity continues to be given to the Danzig and other Polish incidents, but with only a few exceptions the anti-Polish press campaign is relegated to second and third pages and the relative restraint does not convey the impression that these incidents, for the time being at any rate, are to be exploited to their full extent.

In comment on the latest of these incidents, the reported firing at Liessau (Danzig territory) by Polish customs officials at the driver of a German lorry proceeding from East Prussia through the Corridor to Germany, the line is taken that the question has become ever more pressing as to how long undisciplined and excited Polish officials should be allowed to shoot at harmless Germans. Transit traffic through the Corridor is being endangered and the German public must wake up to the fact that at the present moment no safe connexion by land existed between the Reich and its East Prussian territory. The Polish Government has violated agreements which formed an important pre-requisite for the maintenance of normal relations between Poland and Germany, and one commentator, the first to do so, demands that the road should be protected by international agreement (Herr Kriegk in the 'Nachtausgabe' of May 24).

Further items referred to in the anti-Polish press campaign are the alleged arrogance of Polish comment on Italy's adhesion to the Italo-German military alliance, and the neglected condition of the Vistula. The first is disposed of as the outcome of disappointment in Warsaw at the fact that the illusions entertained of Italy's friendship for Poland were, after all, mere dream wishes.

As for the Vistula and its bearing on the Danzig question, the Polish claim that this 'backbone of Poland' must be under Polish control from source to mouth, is refuted with the argument that the neglected condition of the Vistula proves that it has taken the Polish chauvinists twenty years to discover their 'backbone' and, instead of regulating the course of this important stream and making it navigable, they were merely indulging their hysterical greed for land.

Repeated to Warsaw.

¹ Not printed.

No. 640

Minute by Sir A. Cadogan

[C 7878/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *May 26, 1939*

The French Ambassador has just rung me up¹ to say that he has received a telephone message from M. Bonnet to the effect that the latter has examined our draft formula for the Agreement² with Russia and has obtained M. Daladier's approval of it. This is on the understanding that the draft must be read in the light of the explanations given in the Memorandum,³ more especially in regard to the reference to Article 16 of the Covenant. That is to say, the French Government understand that this reference would not imply that action under the Agreement was to depend on a decision of the Council. I said that of course that was our intention, which, if it did not appear clearly from the formula, was, I thought, explained in the Memorandum.

M. Corbin added that the French Chargé d'Affaires in Moscow was being instructed to join His Majesty's Ambassador in making joint communication of the formula to the Soviet Government.

In the meanwhile M. Bonnet proposed to communicate the formula to the Soviet Ambassador in Paris, to whom hitherto all communications on this subject had been addressed.

A. C.

¹ The time of receipt of this message is not recorded, but was presumably before the despatch of telegram No. 123 to Moscow (No. 634).

² See No. 624.

³ See No. 625.

No. 641

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax
(Received June 7)

No. 285 [R 4648/661/67]

ANGORA, *May 26, 1939*

His Majesty's Representative in Turkey presents his compliments to His Majesty's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and with reference to Angora telegram No. 253¹ of May 26, has the honour to transmit herewith copy of a letter from the Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs.

¹ Not printed. This telegram was a full summary of the letter here printed. Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen was informed on May 29 that the points raised in the letter (as summarized in the telegram) would be examined as soon as possible.

ENCLOSURE IN No. 641

ANKARA, *le 25 mai 1939*

Mon cher Ambassadeur,

J'ai l'honneur de Vous accuser réception de Votre lettre en date du 18 mai

1939¹ et en me référant aux renseignements que je Vous ai fournis sur notre manière de voir relativement à la question des Balkans, je m'empresse de Vous en donner ici une relation écrite.

Je suis pleinement d'accord avec Votre Excellence en ce qui concerne l'éventualité d'une agression contre la Grèce. La guerre qui en découlerait devant avoir évidemment le caractère d'une guerre dans la région méditerranéenne impliquerait la coopération turco-britannique si la Turquie ou l'Angleterre décidait d'y prendre part.

L'engagement de la Turquie envers la Grèce ne lui impose aucune obligation de prendre part à une telle guerre à moins que l'agression vienne de la Bulgarie ou d'une tierce Puissance agissant de concert avec la Bulgarie. Je dois toutefois apporter une précision à cette formule en relevant la réserve formulée par la Grèce lors de la conclusion du Pacte balkanique relativement à une action concertée de la Bulgarie avec l'Italie.

Quant à la Grande-Bretagne son engagement d'assister la Grèce est avant tout conditionné par le fait de la résistance hellénique et il est en même temps de caractère unilatéral, sans limite de temps et dépendant uniquement de la volonté de la Grande-Bretagne de le retirer sans formalité contractuelle.

Telle est à ce que [je] crois la position juridique de nos deux pays vis-à-vis d'une agression éventuelle contre la Grèce.

Par la teneur de l'alinéa 3 de la déclaration commune la Turquie se trouve donc dans la situation de coopérer en tous cas avec la Grande-Bretagne si cette Puissance décide de s'opposer par les armes à l'agression dont il s'agit. Pour plus de précision je devrais ajouter que même si la Grande-Bretagne retirait sa garantie à la Grèce ou si les conditions requises pour la mise en œuvre de cette garantie n'étaient pas remplies, la Turquie et la Grande Bretagne se trouvent être liées par une assistance mutuelle dans tous les cas où l'Italie participe directement ou indirectement à une agression dont découlerait une guerre dans laquelle la Grande-Bretagne ou la Turquie serait engagée.

Donc, la position dans la région méditerranéenne et en présence d'une agression directe ou indirecte de l'Italie, est tout à fait nette et il sera extrêmement facile de la formuler dans l'accord définitif.

En ce qui concerne la Roumanie et la région balkanique en général, la situation se présente sous une forme quelque peu différente. Voici les diverses éventualités qui peuvent être envisagées :

- 1 — Une action italo-allemande se répandant dans les Balkans.
- 2 — La neutralité — improbable mais possible — de l'une des deux Puissances de l'Axe en présence d'une agression de l'autre dans les Balkans.
- 3 — Aggression contre la Roumanie d'une Puissance autre que l'Italie et l'Allemagne.

La position contractuelle de la Turquie en présence de ces éventualités est connue du Gouvernement Britannique. La Turquie n'a assumé envers la Roumanie qu'une obligation limitée à l'action bulgare seule ou combinée.

¹ Not printed. This letter embodied part of the instructions sent to Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen in No. 537. See also No. 549.

Faut-il encore mentionner que dans le cas d'action combinée la Turquie a fait des réserves en ce qui concerne l'U.R.S.S.

Ainsi bien que dans les deux premières éventualités la Turquie n'ait jusqu'ici assumé aucune obligation juridique envers la Roumanie, il est à remarquer que dans la première éventualité la Turquie et l'Angleterre co-opèrent déjà effectivement en Méditerranée.

Pour la seconde éventualité l'obligation de la Turquie découle seulement de l'article 3 de la déclaration commune.

Quant à la troisième éventualité rien ne lie la Turquie pour autant qu'il ne s'agirait pas d'une action bulgare. A ce propos il y a lieu de préciser ici que la Turquie ne serait en aucun cas disposée à assumer une obligation d'assistance par une formule générale englobant également l'éventualité d'une action de l'U.R.S.S. contre la Roumanie. Ceci même si la Grande-Bretagne appliquait sa garantie envers la Roumanie et même si l'assistance mutuelle turco-britannique avait déjà commencé à fonctionner à la suite d'une action directe ou indirecte de l'Italie. Dans une pareille éventualité — tout à fait théorique d'ailleurs — l'engagement de la Turquie en ce qui concerne la région méditerranéenne produirait son plein effet sans qu'une coopération puisse être envisagée en Roumanie.

Pour la Grande-Bretagne la garantie donnée à la Roumanie est exactement semblable à celle donnée à la Grèce, c'est-à-dire unilatérale et conditionnelle.

Ce cas présente tout de même une différence essentielle avec le cas précédent en ce qui concerne les effets de cette garantie sur le déclenchement de l'assistance turco-britannique.

En moins qu'il ne s'agisse d'une action italienne, la région méditerranéenne n'étant plus en cause, un engagement direct seul peut assurer la coopération entre nos deux pays. Or, c'est ici que se présente l'inconvénient de l'engagement unilatéral combiné avec une clause contractuelle de longue durée. En effet, si une disposition est insérée à ce sujet dans l'accord définitif ceci peut avoir comme effet, soit de donner à la Roumanie sans nulle contrepartie une assurance lui laissant une entière liberté d'action dans sa politique générale (cas de continuation de la garantie britannique pendant toute la durée de l'accord définitif); soit la création d'une situation quelque peu vague pour la mise en œuvre de notre assistance mutuelle (cas du retrait de la garantie britannique) et soit encore de faire dépendre le secours envisagé de la seule volonté du Gouvernement Britannique sans que la menace contre la Turquie puisse agir pour déclencher l'assistance turco-britannique indirectement liée à la garantie unilatérale susindiquée (possibilité de retrait de la garantie ou retrait effectif de la garantie).

Votre Excellence conviendra qu'il n'y a aucun avantage à remplacer ainsi une garantie unilatérale par les effets d'un accord durable sans qu'une obligation quelconque ait été assumée par la Partie la plus intéressée.

En envisageant les deux éventualités qui restent en cause, celle de l'Allemagne ou celle d'une tierce Puissance attaquant seule ou combinée avec d'autres mais sans l'Italie, il n'est pas davantage souhaitable de laisser persister une équivoque se traduisant par une action possible contre l'U.R.S.S.

ou par la résistance isolée de la Turquie contre l'Allemagne ou une tierce Puissance.

D'autre part si l'accord définitif entre nos deux pays prévoit l'assistance mutuelle pour le cas d'une agression conduisant à une guerre dans les Balkans, cette formule générale se rapportant à toute la région balkanique équivaudrait, sans la clause restrictive que j'ai eu l'honneur de suggérer, à une garantie durable accordée par la Grande-Bretagne et la Turquie à la Yougoslavie et à la Bulgarie sans nulle contrepartie. L'inconvénient qui résulterait d'une telle situation pour le succès de nos efforts politiques auprès des Cabinets de Belgrade et de Sofia me paraît être indéniable.

C'est pour ces motifs que je crois devoir à nouveau faire ressortir les avantages de la formule que j'ai eu l'honneur de proposer et qui fait dépendre le déclenchement de l'assistance Turco-Britannique d'une agression des Puissances de l'Axe conduisant à une guerre dans les Balkans de manière à menacer la sécurité de la Turquie.

Je tiens toutefois à dire à Votre Excellence que les réflexions ci-dessus exposées ne présentent aucun caractère de rigidité et qu'une adaptation de nos points de vue respectifs peut aisément se faire à la lumière d'un échange de vues de fond entre les deux Gouvernements. Cet échange de vues étant imminent, j'ai voulu Vous donner un aperçu d'ensemble des différentes réflexions qui se présentent au sujet de la sécurité balkanique, question un peu plus complexe que celle de l'assistance méditerranéenne.

Veillez, &c.,

S. SARACOLU

No. 642

Mr. Gallienne (Tallinn) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 7)

No. 67 [N 2853/64/63]

TALLINN, May 26, 1939

His Majesty's Consul at Tallinn presents his compliments to His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Foreign Office, London, and, with reference to Tallinn telegram No. 6¹ of the 26th May, 1939, has the honour to transmit to him a copy of his despatch No. 161 of the 26th May to His Majesty's Minister, Riga, respecting Estonian foreign policy.

¹ Not printed. This telegram summarized the conversation reported in the text.

ENCLOSURE IN No. 642

Mr. Gallienne to Mr. Orde

No. 161

TALLINN, May 26, 1939

Sir,

Your telegram No. 6¹ of the 25th May, regarding Anglo-Russian co-operation against aggression, was received yesterday evening and I arranged

¹ Not printed. This telegram instructed Mr. Gallienne to inform the Estonian Government of the tenor of Foreign Office telegram No. 21 to Riga (No. 610).

to call on the Estonian Minister for Foreign Affairs after dinner, when I handed to him an *aide-mémoire*² of which a copy is attached. I also informed him orally that there would be no idea of inserting in the formula any unsolicited guarantee of the Baltic States, which would not be mentioned by name.

2. M. Selter studied the *aide-mémoire* with great care and expressed his gratitude. Since last September he had had a very high opinion of Mr. Chamberlain and his present attitude and actions deserved the greatest praise. His Excellency congratulated His Majesty's Government on the approaching understanding with Soviet Russia, which was all-important for Europe. He asked whether I expected a written reply, and I said it was not necessary, although he might himself think differently. He then said he would let me have a reply shortly.

3. M. Selter went on to say that the German Government had agreed to all the Estonian suggestions regarding the Estonian-German Non-Aggression Pact, but that the matter of the reservation of the Estonian-Latvian military alliance³ was still under consideration. The German Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs had now drafted a clause which, it was hoped, would be satisfactory to both parties, and this draft was to be submitted to Herr von Ribbentrop at once. M. Munters, the Latvian Minister for Foreign Affairs, was in Berlin, and it had been expected that he would sign the Latvian-German pact. He would, however, only do so if this clause were inserted, and, if there were a refusal, he would leave Berlin immediately. He, M. Selter, had been speaking to M. Munters on the telephone that day and he would meet him in Riga in two days' time. M. Selter had informed the German Minister to Estonia that he regarded the reservation of the Estonian-Latvian military alliance as a *sine qua non* of the Estonian Non-Aggression Pact. If a non-aggression pact with Germany were signed which omitted the reservation of the Estonian-Latvian military alliance, there would be grounds for protest by the Soviet Union. M. Selter had been invited to go to Berlin to sign the pact but had declined, saying that he had not sufficient time at present.

4. The Minister had also asked that the German Non-Aggression Pact should include a provision that if either party were at war with a third State the pact could be immediately denounced. This had been suggested by the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Estonian Parliament, which had pointed out that there was a similar provision in the Estonian-Soviet Non-Agression Pact. Obviously the position might arise that Estonia could denounce the Soviet pact but not the German pact and would therefore be legally tied to one side. If Germany refused to accept this provision—and from M. Selter's manner I gathered that he rather expected this—the Estonian Government would probably find it expedient to make a unilateral declaration that they renounced their right of denunciation in the Estonian-Soviet Pact.

5. It was regarded as desirable that the Estonian-German and Latvian-

² Not printed.

³ This Treaty of 1923 is printed in *British and Foreign State Papers*, vol. 118, p. 242.

German Non-Aggression Pacts should be signed, since there was considerable uneasiness in both countries which might be temporarily quietened by this pact. Also, the German minorities in both Estonia and Latvia, but principally in Latvia, were showing signs of intransigence and were strongly opposed to the German Non-Aggression Pact. It might be necessary to take steps to curb the activities of these German minorities, but the signature of the pact might serve as a deterrent to them from making further agitation. The Estonian Government did not attach undue importance to the German Non-Aggression Pact and would not like to sign it in face of disapproval by an interested Power. He was instructing the Estonian Minister at Moscow to explain the position to M. Molotov or M. Potemkin. He said that he knew how occupied His Majesty's Government and His Majesty's representatives must be, but if it should be possible to use influence on the Soviet Government so that they would not view the Estonian-German Pact with disapproval, he would be most grateful.

6. Cuttings from the 'Baltic Times' of the 25th May are enclosed.⁴ They give an interview (written by Mr. A. C. Smith, British Council assistant to this Legation) with the Foreign Minister, in the course of which he expresses his implicit trust in the British Government and says that no one in Estonia has any doubt that Great Britain is fulfilling the hopes which all peace-loving nations have placed in her.

7. I am sending copies of this despatch direct, by bag, to the Foreign Office.

I have, &c.,

W. H. GALLIENNE

⁴ Not printed.

No. 643

Letter from the French Ambassador to Viscount Halifax

(Received May 26)

[C 7879/3356/18]

AMBASSADE DE FRANCE, A LONDRES, 26 mai 1939

Cher Lord Halifax,

Le Gouvernement français a procédé dès hier à l'étude du projet de pacte tripartite entre le Royaume-Uni, la France et l'U.R.S.S. dont vous aviez bien voulu me faire tenir le texte dans l'après-midi. Après examen, et à la lumière des explications contenues dans le mémorandum annexe, le Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, d'accord avec M. le Président du Conseil, m'a chargé de vous faire savoir que le Gouvernement de la République donne son approbation aux propositions britanniques, ainsi qu'à la procédure que vous avez suggérée. Le Chargé d'Affaires de France à Moscou va donc recevoir les instructions nécessaires pour effectuer avec l'Ambassadeur de Grande-Bretagne une démarche conjointe auprès du Gouvernement des Soviets, dès que Sir William Seeds aura reçu les instructions nécessaires à cet effet.

Veuillez agréer, &c.,

CH. CORBIN

*Letter from Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw)*¹

[C 7388/54/18]

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, May 26, 1939

Dear Kennard,

Your letter of May 16² to Alec Cadogan of which he has sent me a copy and to whom I am sending a copy of this.

I think my letter of May 4³ must have been in manuscript, for I cannot find a copy of it; and I cannot remember now exactly what Attolico said. My impression however is that he said that the Polish Government (Beck) was the only one that had any advance knowledge of the possibility of a German *coup* on Bohemia and Moravia.

I do not think that Attolico was romancing and he is certainly not wilfully blind, though he may be wilfully misleading. He was at the time endeavouring to explain to me why the Germans were so incensed over the Polish attitude. (In the matter of Poland the Italians have no axe to grind, except peace, and have always been very friendly with the Poles with whom in private their sympathies lie.)

I agree with you however that the Poles were not given any warning of the Prague *coup* at the moment at which it was effected. Nevertheless I am inclined to believe that the possibility of Germany taking Bohemia and Moravia into their sphere of influence and leaving Slovakia to Poland's was one of the matters of far wider scope discussed at Berchtesgaden by Hitler and Beck and referred to by the latter in his speech on May 5.

To that extent I fancy that Beck was, in fact, forewarned. Teschen, &c., was Poland's share of the loot after Munich and a hint may well have been given that Slovakia might be so after Prague. I would even hazard a guess that Witkowitz was what Beck claimed if the Germans did annex Bohemia and Moravia. In the end the Germans double-crossed the Poles since I know for practically certain that the German occupation of Mährisch Ostrau and Witkowitz (which was undertaken before Hacha even reached Berlin) was effected in order to forestall the Poles who were known to have their eyes on this valuable corner of the Czech carcass.

NEVILLE HENDERSON

¹ Sir N. Henderson sent a copy of this letter to the Foreign Office on May 26.

² No. 532.

³ No. 366. The letter was in manuscript.

CHAPTER IX

The European situation: Anglo-Italian relations:
the position in Danzig: decision to send Mr.
Strang to Moscow: Anglo-French proposals to
Soviet Government. (May 27–June 7, 1939.)

No. 645

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 27, 2.25 p.m.)
No. 214 Telegraphic [C 7689/54/18]

PARIS, May 27, 1939, 1.14 p.m.

Minister for Foreign Affairs begs me to remind you how anxious he is that the precise terms of the Anglo-Polish Agreement should be drawn up as soon as possible, so as to enable the French Government to draw up definite terms of the Franco-Polish Agreement.

Repeated to Warsaw.

No. 646

Mr. Orde (Riga) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 27, 3.35 p.m.)
No. 16 Telegraphic [C 7688/3356/18]

RIGA, May 27, 1939, 3.2 p.m.

Your telegram No. 21¹ and Tallinn telegram No. 6.²

Communication was made on May 25 to Secretary-General in absence of Minister for Foreign Affairs. Reaction was slight, but Secretary-General expressed appreciation of His Majesty's Government's understanding of apprehensions of Russia's neighbours. He interpreted communication as indicating that there would be nothing to lead to Russian help to Baltic States unless they asked for it.

Director of . . .³ Department, whom I saw later, said that it all depended on form of agreement with Russia whether it would be welcome in Latvia.

Neither gave me any precise indication of position as regards Non-Aggression Pact with Germany. As indicated in Tallinn telegram No. 6 it is regarded by German element here as a betrayal of them by Germany.

¹ No. 610.

² Not printed. See No. 642, note 1.

³ The text is here uncertain.

No. 647

Viscount Halifax to Sir R. Hoare (Bucharest)

No. 252 Telegraphic [R 4371/661/67]

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 27, 1939, 5.0 p.m.

Angora telegram No. 249.¹

If it is the fact that the Roumanian Government have made representations to the Turkish Government urging that Anglo-Turkish Agreement should not be carried further particularly in so far as concerns the Balkans, you should represent to the Roumanian Government that we are surprised and not a little discouraged by the fact that they should have seen fit to take such a step without even consulting or informing us. You should point out that the Agreement between Great Britain and Turkey is an essential part of the general arrangement to protect Roumania against aggression and that, unless they have no confidence in us, they should not take exception to it, and must brace themselves to face Axis dislike of it.

Repeated to Angora.

¹ No. 626.

No. 648

Sir W. Seeds (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax
(Received May 28, 10.0 a.m.)

No. 103 Telegraphic [C 7682/3356/18]

MOSCOW, May 27, 1939, 10.59 p.m.

French Chargé d'Affaires and I saw M. Molotov this afternoon who was accompanied by M. Potemkin.

2. M. Molotov said at once that he had already studied our proposal¹ of which he had received the text from Paris and that his personal reaction was in the negative. The impression produced on his mind was that Great Britain and France wanted to continue conversations *ad infinitum* but were not interested in obtaining concrete results.

3. I said that His Majesty's Government who had made so great an effort to—as they thought successfully—meet the wishes of the Soviet Government would be as astounded as I was to hear this. On what did he base his impression? He said that our introducing references to the League of Nations was a clear indication that we were prepared to make effective co-operation dependent on the interminable delays of League of Nations procedure. Soviet Government wanted immediate guarantee of effective mutual assistance against aggressors but Great Britain and France were apparently satisfied with a state of affairs where Russia would be bombed by the aggressor while Bolivia blocked all action at Geneva. I explained over and over again reason for our allusion to the League Covenant in the terms of Your Lordship's instructions but my repeated emphasis on 'the spirit' and 'principles'

¹ See No. 624.

of the Covenant was only met by repeated insistence on the League's 'procedure'. He seemed to be either blindly acting on instructions or else incapable of understanding.

4. Latter interpretation could be applied to his next astonishing argument when he asked why under Point 5 we were proposing to safeguard the rights and position of an *aggressor* State. I explained that the point in question referred only to States to whom we were proposing to lend assistance, to which he retorted that this safeguarding of rights was typical of that 'reserve' which he read into our proposals and which was calculated to ensure the maximum of talk and the minimum of results. He repeated that the Soviet Government wanted effective guarantee of action, not words and conversations.

5. We urged that Point 3 covered effective action as regards the method and nature of assistance, i.e. military consultations, but he insisted that that point as well as Point 4 referred vaguely to the future. He said that Soviet wishes in that respect had been clearly expressed but we had not replied to them.

6. After more wrangling on the League of Nations question he said he had been expressing his personal views which were unchanged; he would report to his Government and give us the answer in due course. I suggested that the Soviet reply should be held up until I had communicated with Your Lordship in the hope of finding means to clear up the misunderstanding but he gave me no definite reply to this.

7. Assuming he was not merely manœuvring to close negotiations I can only suggest we should propose some formula which would provide (on the lines of Points 1 and 3 of the Soviet proposals mentioned in my telegram No. 93²) for two simultaneous agreements, one being pact of mutual assistance and the second a 'concrete agreement as to the form and extent of assistance'. But I see no possibility of meeting him on the League of Nations question as presumably we could not lay down in our formula that we eliminate all League 'procedure'.³

² No. 520.

³ For a fuller account of this interview, see No. 657.

No. 649

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax
(Received May 28, 9.55 a.m.)
No. 180 Telegraphic [C 7686/3356/18]

WARSAW, May 27, 1939, 11.26 p.m.

Your telegram No. 182.¹

I have communicated to Minister for Foreign Affairs text of draft agreement and given such explanations to him as seemed necessary.

2. M. Beck expressed his renewed appreciation of the . . .² in which His Majesty's Government had taken into consideration, and said he had no

¹ No. 635.

² The text is here uncertain.

comment to make on the draft. He would however make one small suggestion.

3. If agreement were concluded it might be thought in certain circles here that it superseded guarantees given to Poland and other countries.

4. He therefore hopes that it would be possible to emphasise in any communiqué which was issued in connexion with conclusion of agreement that it would in no way affect these guarantees or agreements with Poland and other countries which would remain unimpaired.

5. As regards the reversal of order of two contingencies mentioned in paragraph six of your telegram, M. Beck said that he would quite understand if it were impossible to effect this.

Repeated to Moscow.

No. 650

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)

No. 232 Saving: Telegraphic [R 4410/7/22]

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 27, 1939

My telegram No. 227 Saving.¹

I have been reflecting further on the possibility of promoting some improvement in Franco-Italian relations. In this connexion I recall that at the beginning of the conversation which I had with M. Daladier on the 20th May² he seemed to suggest that if the Italians would be willing to proceed to a substantial degree of demobilisation, particularly in Libya, and adopted a reasonable attitude in regard to Tunis, he might be ready to consider certain concessions to Italy.

2. I should be grateful if you would ascertain from the French Government whether they would be willing to authorise us to sound the Italians as to their willingness to play their part in such an arrangement.

Repeated to Rome.

¹ No. 638.

² See No. 570.

No. 651

Sir P. Loraine (Rome) to Viscount Halifax
(Received May 28, 10.0 a.m.)

No. 483 Telegraphic [R 4398/1/22]

ROME, May 28, 1939, 1.35 a.m.

I was received at 6.30 p.m. by Signor Mussolini. Count Ciano was also present and acted as translator, Signor Mussolini speaking only in Italian.

2. The essence of the conversation which lasted twenty-five minutes with civility but without any sign of cordiality, is as follows:—

(a) Signor Mussolini requested me to put to His Majesty's Government the question whether in view of the Anglo-Turkish Declaration which he

described as an alliance, and the impending Treaty (alliance) with Russia and of the encirclement of the Axis Powers which these instruments and the policy of guarantees connoted, the Anglo-Italian Agreement had any further value.

(b) Signor Mussolini made a statement that any act of encirclement directed against Germany is considered by him as likewise directed against Italy.

3. For details of the conversation, see my immediately following telegram.¹

¹ No. 652.

No. 652

Sir P. Loraine (Rome) to Viscount Halifax
(Received May 28, 10.0 a.m.)
No. 484 Telegraphic [R 4399/1/22]

ROME, May 28, 1939, 4.15 a.m.

My immediately preceding telegram.¹

Signor Mussolini asked me whether I had any particular communication to make to him. I said no: I had no instructions to raise any question with him; but I did wish to let him know that I had felt myself honoured at being entrusted with my mission in Rome, that he could rely on my complete goodwill, and that I should make it my endeavour to interpret truly the policy of the Prime Minister and of Your Lordship towards Italy of which he had first-hand knowledge.

2. Signor Mussolini acknowledged this civilly but curtly. He went on to say that the conclusion of an Anglo-Turkish Alliance and the imminent conclusion of an Anglo-Soviet Treaty had made him reflect whether Anglo-Italian Agreement possessed any further value; for those Treaties coupled with guarantees given by His Majesty's Government to various States represented a policy of encirclement of the Axis Powers.

3. I enquired of His Excellency whether he wished me to communicate his observations to you or to comment on them myself.

4. Signor Mussolini replied that he wished me to tell His Majesty's Government what he had said and also that he was willing to hear what I might myself wish to say on the subject.

5. I asked in order to be certain that I understood what he wanted whether he wished me to inform you that he *might* put the question about the value of the Anglo-Italian Agreement or to tell you that he *was* putting question.

6. He answered that he was putting the question: and I undertook accordingly to put it.

7. His Excellency thereupon invited me to state my own comments.

8. I enquired first whether he had studied the statements of the Prime Minister that His Majesty's Government was not pursuing a policy of encirclement and begged him to give them his full attention.

¹ No. 651.

9. I observed secondly that when Italy took action in Albania it was perfectly open to His Majesty's Government to maintain that Mediterranean *status quo* which was a basic object of the Anglo-Italian Agreement had been altered; but that they had refrained from raising the question and had allowed Anglo-Italian Agreement to stand.

10. Thirdly new Anglo-Turkish Declaration did not affect the *status quo* of the Mediterranean and did not therefore impinge on Anglo-Italian Agreement.

11. Fourthly that the prospect of arrangement with Russia did not touch the Mediterranean and had therefore no connexion with Anglo-Italian Agreement.

12. Signor Mussolini replied that the facts spoke for themselves. British policy of alliances and guarantees was in effect a policy of encirclement of the Axis Powers. And he then made the statement recorded in paragraph 2 (b) of my immediately preceding telegram.

13. He went on to say that it was British guarantee to Poland that had made the Poles so intransigent about Danzig and the Corridor to the extent that they had not even accepted Herr Hitler's very moderate proposals as a basis for discussion. But for British guarantee which had rendered the Poles completely intractable a satisfactory German-Polish Agreement would have been reached some time ago.

14. I told Signor Mussolini that I was unable to accept this construction of action of His Majesty's Government and I invited him to refer to text of guarantee to Poland which did not place any bar on a direct German-Polish Agreement which indeed my Government would welcome on a reasonable and equitable basis, but did pledge British support to Poland in the event of the latter feeling that her independence, her national liberties and her right to freedom of action were in such danger as to necessitate resistance by force.

15. If, as I understood, Herr Hitler's 'moderate' terms included unconditional return of Danzig to the Reich why should Poland agree? She had her rights in respect of Danzig guaranteed by Treaty and why should she be expected to surrender them?

16. Signor Mussolini replied that these rights were derived from the Treaty of Versailles, that Danzig was undoubtedly a German town and should of right revert to the Reich.

17. I observed that Germany had justified absorption of Bohemia morally by German need for 'Lebensraum'. I begged him to reflect that from Polish point of view Danzig proportionately was as vital a question of 'Lebensraum' for Poland and might be even more so. Why should Germany claim right of 'Lebensraum' for herself and deny it to others? Moreover it was not as if Danzig was under Polish rule. Danzig was a Free City and the rights of the inhabitants were guaranteed by relevant Treaties but the town was an indispensable outlet for Poland.

18. Signor Mussolini said that it was the town that Germany claimed; all necessary port facilities would be granted by Germany to Poland when Germany had possession. Moreover why was Danzig so necessary to Poland?

If it were then why had Poland created her own Polish port at Gdynia? Why should Poland have two ports?

19. I replied it did not seem to me very incongruous that a country like Poland with a population of 30 to 40 millions and with a fractional coastline should need two ports; one would think it was quite a modest allowance in the circumstances and furthermore if Germany owned Danzig that would completely blanket Gdynia. I regretted therefore that I felt bound to register my total disagreement from His Excellency's thesis.

20. Signor Mussolini reverted to his opinion that alliance plus guarantee policy was one of encirclement of the Axis Powers. Anglo-Turkish Treaty was bad enough but Treaty with communist Bolshevik Russia was far worse. Was England of all countries going to let loose Communism in the world and on herself? This seemed to him very grave indeed. And again why was the United Kingdom dishing out guarantees to countries which had not asked for them and certainly did not require them? (I heard him in Italian describe guarantee to Roumania as 'absurd' but I noticed that Count Ciano did not translate this observation.)

21. I said this was the second point on which I found it necessary to disagree respectfully but quite definitely from His Excellency's point of view. I was unable to admit that guarantees were either unwanted, unnecessary or unwelcome. His Excellency had told me his interpretation of meaning attached by Poland to British guarantee and his opinion of the harmful effects of British policy. I begged him in my turn to take into closer consideration the actual terms of the guarantees given by His Majesty's Government and explanations given by the Prime Minister and Your Lordship of their underlying intentions, of which I was bound to feel he had taken but small account, and determination of His Majesty's Government to implement those guarantees in the terms in which they have been given to them and the sense in which they understand them.

22. Signor Mussolini said that he was bound to conclude that His Majesty's Government having regard to this system of guarantees and alliances had embarked on an altogether new line of policy and it was for that reason that he said he felt it necessary to put question of value of Anglo-Italian Agreement and he asked whether I had anything further to say.

23. I replied I had nothing further to say. I would immediately report our conversation to my Government but as I had told him in the first place I had no instructions to raise any particular question with him.

24. He then accompanied me in silence to the door and on shaking hands wore for the first time since I had passed through it the famous smile of which I freely admit the charm.²

² Lord Halifax telegraphed to Sir P. Loraine on May 29 his 'personal congratulations' on the attitude which Sir P. Loraine had adopted and the language which he had used.

No. 653

Sir P. Loraine (Rome) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 28, 4.0 p.m.)
No. 485 Telegraphic [R 4400/1/22]

ROME, May 28, 1939, 1.30 p.m.

My two immediately preceding telegrams.¹

I fear that my distinction between facts and frills is only too well justified. I must draw the conclusion that Gayda's recent articles² are as I suspect the true interpretation of attitude of Italian Government. Whether policy of complete identification with Germany is that of Signor Mussolini interpreted by Count Ciano or that suggested by Count Ciano to Signor Mussolini is henceforth immaterial.

2. I felt something was in the air the moment I saw Count Ciano in the Palazzo Venezia for my Secretary had been told by Protocol Department that I should be *à deux* with Signor Mussolini. The latter took the offensive and I at once determined with all civility to stand my ground and not to plead that he should abstain from denouncing the Anglo-Italian Agreement.

3. I decided that if it was a trial of strength only a firm attitude would serve; and that if Signor Mussolini [had] really made up his mind to burn all his bridges with us any show of weakness or alarm would merely encourage him in that direction.

4. Unless my language has given him pause, which I cannot reasonably hope, I fear the die is cast and that the only argument is the visibility of overwhelming physical strength.

5. I feel the more justified in reaching this conclusion inasmuch as my recommendations to you hitherto have all been in the direction of keeping open every door we could for Signor Mussolini.

6. If Signor Mussolini does denounce Anglo-Italian Agreement his prestige may get away with it but in my opinion its denunciation will create more consternation in this country than anything else could at the present juncture.

¹ Nos. 651-2.

² Recent articles by Dr. Gayda had contained strong attacks on Great Britain and France.

No. 654

Sir W. Seeds (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 28, 4.50 p.m.)
No. 104 Telegraphic [C 7683/3356/18]

MOSCOW, May 28, 1939, 2.12 p.m.

My immediately preceding telegram.¹

I confided last night to the Turkish Ambassador, our only well-wisher here, disappointing reaction of M. Molotov to our offer of complete reciprocity.

2. He told me that some days ago M. Molotov (often [*sic* ? after] commenting on the Prime Minister's statement in the House of Commons about

¹ No. 648.

the good progress of the Anglo-Turkish as compared with Anglo-Soviet negotiations²) asked him whether the Turkish Government considered themselves bound by the Anglo-Turkish Declaration in the matter of possible war in the Mediterranean even now when definite agreement had not yet been concluded. Ambassador had answered that such was his opinion but he would ask for confirmation from Angora. He had now received telegram from his Government stating that they did consider themselves so bound pending the conclusion of the various agreements including one on armaments. He hoped to see M. Molotov today in order to give him this information.

3. This may perhaps help to make clear to the Soviet Government that Point 3 of our draft agreement is not applied exceptionally to the Soviet Union as a means of postponing indefinitely what M. Molotov called effectual action.

Repeated to Angora.

² The reference appears to be to the Prime Minister's speech in the debate in the House of Commons on May 19. See Parl. Deb., 5th Ser., H. of C., vol. 347, cols. 1828-40.

No. 655

Sir R. Hoare (Bucharest) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 29, 10.0 a.m.)
No. 225 Telegraphic [R 4404/661/67]

BUCHAREST, May 28, 1939, 9.15 p.m.

(? Your telegram No. 252).¹

Did you not receive from M. Cretzianu report of conversation between Roumanian and Yugoslav Ministers for Foreign Affairs? If you did I venture to suggest expostulation which you desire me to make should be based on His Majesty's Government's own appreciation and not on that of the Turkish Government at any rate until such moment as the Turkish Government have informed us of the existence or danger of serious divergence of view between the Roumanian and Turkish Governments and have formally invoked our assistance in surmounting it. Would it be altogether unreasonable if Roumanians resent the fact that without even giving themselves time to answer Roumanian communication, the Turks had provoked His Majesty's Government to administer a fairly severe rebuke?

2. As I understand the matter the Roumanian Government are anxious to maintain at all costs the façade of Balkan unity and therefore it is no use to persist in anything likely to increase the pressure of the Axis on Yugoslavia and they believe maintenance of façade would greatly facilitate common action in the event of a war which brought Anglo-French guarantee of Roumania and Greece and Anglo-Turkish covenant into action.

3. On the basis of my present knowledge of ultimate form of Anglo-Turkish Agreement I do not feel capable of effectively rebutting the thesis of

¹ This reference had been omitted, but it was suggested on the file copy that it should be to Foreign Office telegram No. 252 to Bucharest (No. 647).

Roumanian Minister for Foreign Affairs indicated in paragraph 3 (d) of Angora telegram No. 250.²

Repeated to Angora and Belgrade.

² No. 633.

No. 656

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 30)

No. 49 Saving: Telegraphic [C 7771/54/18]

WARSAW, May 28, 1939

League High Commissioner arrived in Warsaw on May 26. He lunched with Colonel Beck and had long conversation with him and (? spokesman)¹ of Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He dined with me last night and gave following information.

2. Before leaving Basle he had received via German Consul a pressing invitation from Herr von Ribbentrop to visit Berlin at a very early date. He therefore planned to leave Danzig, where he arrives this morning, on about June 4 and pass through Berlin on his way to Basle. This will seem natural since he is to receive an honorary degree at Basle University on June 9. He will endeavour to see Herr Hitler but doubts very much whether this will be possible.

3. Colonel Beck, being asked what sort of message M. Burckhardt could convey to German authorities in either Danzig or Berlin, had suggested that he should give as his impressions of Polish attitude:

(a) that Polish Government were quite willing to discuss Danzig problem but not under threat of a German *coup*. Present state of tension was not good atmosphere for such talks and first requisite was restoration of calm;

(b) Occupation of Memel had been definitely prejudicial to Polish position on Baltic and was liable to render Poland stiffer about Danzig and the Corridor;

(c) Public opinion in Poland, in spite of its outward calm, was very much roused;

(d) German methods of dealing with countries such as Czecho-Slovakia were quite inappropriate in the case of Poland.

4. M. Burckhardt informed me he would speak somewhat on these lines both in Danzig . . .¹ Berlin, but he felt it would be injudicious for him to use arguments (b) and (d) unless he were authorised to quote Colonel Beck which he could not do.

5. A Polish official had reminded M. Burckhardt that under a decision of the League Commission in 1921 High Commissioner had the right and perhaps the duty to invite the Polish Government to send troops to Danzig in certain circumstances.² M. Burckhardt had replied that in his view

¹ The text is here uncertain.

² A resolution to this effect was adopted by the Council of the League of Nations on June 22, 1921. See League of Nations 'Official Journal', 1921, Part 2, p. 671.

circumstances were not the same as in 1921 and that in any case he neither could nor would take such action without first consulting Committee of Three. He admitted to me that this answer was not strictly correct but he had thought it judicious to give it.

6. I discussed with M. Burckhardt the idea that best temporary solution would be a declaration or understanding on lines of paragraph 5 of my telegram No. 172³ and found him in general agreement. I have not hitherto put forward suggestion to Colonel Beck and should be glad to know if you would authorise me to do so.

7. If Your Lordship agrees, M. Burckhardt would be glad to see Mr. Makins at his private house in Basle on June 11 in order to report on the situation in Danzig and results of his talks in Warsaw and Berlin.

8. M. Burckhardt is much upset at reports that he is charged with a mission of mediation and has issued a statement that such a mission is quite beyond his competence.

Repeated to Berlin.

³ No. 584.

No. 657

Sir W. Seeds (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 3)

No. 156 [C 7936/3356/18]

MOSCOW, May 28, 1939

My Lord,

I have the honour to report that M. Payart, the French Chargé d'Affaires, and I proceeded yesterday afternoon to present to M. Molotov the proposals of our respective Governments for an agreement providing for mutual support by the United Kingdom, France and the Soviet Union in the event of aggression in Europe. The interview took place, exceptionally, in the Kremlin, with M. Molotov sitting at a large desk on a raised dais, and M. Potemkin (who acted as interpreter), M. Payart and I at his feet below.

2. I handed in the English draft, and stated that I was happy to present a proposed form of agreement which His Majesty's Government had prepared in the conviction that they were now able to meet the wishes of the Soviet Government. M. Payart presented the French text with the remark that his Government associated themselves fully therewith. M. Potemkin then proceeded, using the French text, to translate aloud the draft into Russian. I noticed that M. Molotov had before him a paper on which he seemed to be checking M. Potemkin's translation.

3. When the latter had ended, M. Molotov said simply and clearly that he had already been able to study the draft, of which he had received a text direct from Paris, and that it seemed to him unacceptable. The words he actually used do not translate well into English ('a negative impression' is the dictionary rendering), but in Russian they convey a definite rejection. In view of what we considered the generous and far-reaching nature of the

Anglo-French proposals, neither M. Payart nor I could believe our ears, and thought that we must have mistaken the word, but M. Potemkin's translation put it beyond a doubt. We looked our astonishment, while M. Molotov went on to say that the text of the proposals showed the clear intention of the British and French Governments to continue conversations indefinitely and not to bind themselves to any concrete engagements.

4. I protested strongly and asked him on what he based this remarkable statement, which would shock His Majesty's Government as much as it astounded me. He said that the object of the allusion in the draft to the League of Nations was unmistakable. The cumbrous procedure of the League was a guarantee that the agreement would never come into operation, and he put it that the British and French were prepared to visualise Moscow being bombed by the aggressor while Bolivia was busy blocking all action in Geneva.

5. I said that this was a complete misapprehension. I had been specially authorised to say that the allusion to the principles of the Covenant in no way implied that the entry into operation of the agreement was to depend on any action whatever by the League of Nations. The emphasis was on the principles of the Covenant, which constituted the fundamental basis of the foreign policy of His Majesty's Government; it was our intention to base all the pacts, all the guarantees, we were now negotiating on those same principles; apart from the question of settled policy, it was obviously desirable—and British public opinion would certainly insist—that the principles of collective security against aggression, in the spirit of the Covenant, should be clearly stated so as to take any conceivable sting out of an agreement which might otherwise be construed as disguised aggression on our part. Your Lordship had, I said, publicly proclaimed this fundamental principle of British policy in a speech at Geneva on the 23rd May, and had added that all our international engagements, when concluded, would be laid before the League of Nations.

6. This last statement led to a renewed homily on the cumbrous machinery of Geneva, and M. Payart and I again pointed to the word 'principles' in our draft. I proceeded to say that in the present case and in existing circumstances it would, in fact, not be practical politics to consider having recourse to the League machinery. For one thing, Germany and Italy were not members. That means Article 17, said M. Molotov, and more delays. I pointed out that for that very reason the article in question was not mentioned in our draft. Nor were the remaining portions of Article 16, in order to safeguard the susceptibilities of other nations who, as members of the League, might feel that they might be brought in; I specially cited the omission of that part of the Article which deals with the passage of troops. All this showed that the text of our proposed agreement was carefully drafted to avoid any suggestion that the operation of the pact would involve setting the regular mechanism of the League to work.

7. But I regret to say that quite palpably my words produced not the slightest effect; they seemed not to be heard or understood, although I could check M. Potemkin's interpreting as being excellent; M. Molotov had his

mind made up, and at intervals again told us about Bolivian obstruction and the defects of League procedure.

8. Passing then from what he considered our limitations and reserves in the matter of the League, and of the safeguarding of the susceptibilities of other Powers under Article 16 of the Covenant, M. Molotov invited our attention to Point 5 of our draft, and made the fantastic statement that the words 'without prejudice to the rights and position of other Powers' constituted yet another reserve, this time in favour of the aggressors who were apparently the Powers in question. I patiently explained that the clause was designed to meet the fundamental necessity of strictly respecting the independent rights and sovereignty of the countries whose safety against aggression we were trying to ensure. Why was this necessary, asked M. Molotov, would we not be helping them in their own interests? I answered that we recognised their right to limit even friendly intervention in such matters as, for instance, the passage of troops.

9. M. Molotov next reverted to his original theme that we were deliberately making no serious contribution towards concrete action. I again protested, saying that, in deference to Soviet views, we had abandoned our original proposal for a unilateral declaration by the Soviet Government, and had now substituted a pact of complete reciprocity, covering both direct and indirect aggression, which His Majesty's Government honestly regarded as meeting the three essential points specified in the last reply from Moscow. M. Molotov retorted that we were confining ourselves to words; Points 1 and 2 of our proposals were vitiated by the allusions to the League, but, above all, there was no provision for what he called 'effective action'. M. Payart here stepped into the fray and pointed out that Clause 3 fully covered effective action in the sense of examining methods, military and otherwise, of mutual support and assistance. To this M. Molotov retorted that the clause was vaguely worded and referred to some distant future and unending conversations; the Soviet Government wanted immediate and effective action, and this evidently the British and French Governments wished to avoid; we had evaded the third of the three essential points, the conclusion of a concrete agreement as to the forms and extent of assistance to be rendered mutually.

10. Finally, after further inconclusive argument, he said that his views remained unchanged, but they were, of course, only personal; he would report to his Government, and we would receive a reply in due course. I said I would immediately report to Your Lordship on the regrettable misunderstandings which had arisen in regard to the allusion to the League Covenant, and I suggested that perhaps the definite Soviet reply could be held up pending receipt of further views of His Majesty's Government. But he did not answer this suggestion.

I have, &c.,
WILLIAM SEEDS

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 3)

No. 613 [C 7943/16/18]

BERLIN, *May 28, 1939*

My Lord,

I paid a short visit to Field-Marshal Göring at Karinhall yesterday.

2. Field-Marshal Göring, who had obviously just been talking to someone else on the subject, began by inveighing against the attitude which was being adopted in England towards everything German and particularly in respect of the gold held there on behalf of the National Bank of Czecho-Slovakia.¹ Before, however, I had had time to reply, he was called to the telephone and on his return did not revert to this specific question. He complained instead of British hostility in general, of our political and economic encirclement of Germany and the activities of what he described as the war party in England, &c.

3. I told the Field-Marshal that, before speaking of British hostility, he must understand why the undoubted change of feeling towards Germany in England had taken place. As he knew quite well the basis of all the discussions between Mr. Chamberlain and Herr Hitler last year had been to the effect that, once the Sudeten were allowed to enter the Reich, Germany would leave the Czechs alone and would do nothing to interfere with their independence. Herr Hitler had given a definite assurance to that effect in his letter to the Prime Minister of the 27th September. By yielding to the advice of his 'wild men' and deliberately annexing Bohemia and Moravia, Herr Hitler had not only broken his word to Mr. Chamberlain but had infringed the whole principle of self-determination on which the Munich Agreement rested.

4. At this point the Field-Marshal interrupted me with a description of President Hacha's visit to Berlin. Though it was probably highly coloured, it conformed generally with that I had heard from others, notably Baron Weizsäcker and Dr. Mastny. Certainly President Hacha played no heroic part at his meeting with Herr Hitler. Be that as it may, I told Field-Marshal Göring that it was not possible to talk of free will when I understood that he himself had threatened to bombard Prague with his aeroplanes, if Dr. Hacha refused to sign. The Field-Marshal did not deny the fact but explained how the point had arisen. According to him Dr. Hacha had from the first been prepared to sign everything but had said that constitutionally he could not do so without reference first to Prague. After considerable difficulty telephonic communication with Prague was obtained and the Czech Government had agreed, while adding that they could not guarantee that one Czech

¹ A number of questions had recently been asked in Parliament about the action of the Bank of England in handing over gold, held in the name of the Bank of International Settlements on behalf of the National Bank of Czecho-Slovakia, to the Bank of Bohemia-Moravia. See Parl. Deb., 5th Ser., H. of C., vol. 347, cols. 1917-20, 2078-82, 2531-2, and 2701-60.

battalion at least would not fire on the German troops. It was, he said, only at that stage that he had warned Dr. Hacha that, if German lives were lost, he would bombard Prague. The Field-Marshal also repeated, in reply to some comment of mine, the story that the advance occupation of Witkowitz had been effected solely in order to forestall the Poles who, he said, were known to have the intention of seizing this valuable area at the first opportunity.

5. I thereupon reminded Field-Marshal Göring that, while I had always appreciated the necessity for the Czechs, in view of their geographical position, to live in the friendliest political and economic relations with Great Germany, he had personally assured me last October that this was all that his Government desired. The precipitate action of Germany on the 15th March, which I again ascribed to the wild men of the party, had consequently, apart from everything and everybody else, been a great shock to me personally and had undone all that I had sought to achieve during my two years at Berlin. Moreover, however indifferent this might seem to him, I could not but regard the destruction of the independence of the Czechs as a major political error, even in Germany's own interests.

6. The Field-Marshal appeared a little confused at this personal attack on his own good faith, and assured me that he himself had known nothing of the decision before it had been taken. He would not, he said, have gone to San Remo if he had; nor had his stay there profited him, as he had hoped, owing to the unexpected amount of work which had in consequence been thrust upon him. He then proceeded to give a somewhat unconvincing explanation, though similar to that which Baron Weizsäcker had furnished me with last March,² of the German attempt to come to a satisfactory arrangement with the Czechs and of its failure owing to Czech obstinacy and the revival of what he called the Benes spirit as the result of American encouragement.

7. As my time was limited, I told Field-Marshal Göring that I was well aware of the reasons adduced by his Government to justify its action, but I thought it more important that he himself should understand the British point of view in consequence of it. As the result of the Prague *coup* His Majesty's Government and the British people were determined to resist by force any new aggression. No one desired an amiable arrangement between Germany and Poland in respect of Danzig and the Corridor more than ourselves. But, if Germany endeavoured to settle these questions by unilateral action such as would compel the Poles to resort to arms to safeguard their independence, we and the French as well as other countries would be involved, with all the disastrous consequences which a prolonged world war would entail, especially for Germany, &c. (see your telegram No. 150³). Field-Marshal Göring did not appear to question our readiness to fight and restricted his reply to an attempt to prove that circumstances in 1939 were different to those in 1914, that no Power could overcome Germany in Europe, that a blockade this time would prove unavailing, that France would not stand a long war, that Germany could do more harm to Great

² See Volume IV of this Series, No. 235.

³ No. 431.

Britain than the latter to her, that the history of Germany was one of ups and downs, and that this was one of the 'up' periods, that the Poles had no military experience and that their only officers of any value were those who had acquired their training in the German army, that they were not and never had been a really united nation and that, since France and ourselves could not, and Russia out of self-interest would not, give them any effective military assistance, they would be taught a terrible lesson, &c. The Field-Marshal used, in fact, all the language which might be expected in reply to a statement that Germany was bound to be defeated. While I was perturbed at his reference to the unreality of Polish unity, which resembled the German arguments last year in regard to Czecho-Slovakia, he gave me the impression, by somewhat overstating his case, of considerably less confidence than he expressed.

8. At the end of this tirade, moreover, he asked me whether England, 'out of envy of a strong Germany', was really bent on war with her and, if not, what was to be done to prevent it. I said that nobody in their senses could contemplate modern war without horror, but that we should not shrink from it if Germany resorted to another act of aggression. If, therefore, war was to be avoided, patience was necessary and the wild men in Germany must be restrained. Admittedly present-day Germany was in a dynamic condition, whereas England was by tradition the land of compromise. But compromise had its limits, and I did not see how the situation could be saved unless his Government was prepared to wait in order to allow excited spirits to calm down again and negotiations to be resumed in a better atmosphere.

9. At this point Field-Marshal Göring remarked that if the Poles tried to seize Danzig nothing would stop the Germans from acting at once. As my time was short, I made no comment on this but continued that neither the Prime Minister nor yourself had yet abandoned hope of a peaceful solution either as between Germany and Poland or between Germany and Great Britain, but that everything now entirely depended on Germany's behaviour and actions.

10. As I had already got up to go, the conversation then took a more amicable turn. Though I was in a hurry, he insisted on showing me with much pride the great structural alterations which he is making to the house at Karinhall and which include a new dining-room to hold an incredible number of guests and to be all of marble and hung with tapestries. He mentioned incidentally that the rebuilding would not be completed before November. He also produced with pride drawings of the tapestries, mostly representing naked ladies labelled with the names of various virtues, such as Goodness, Mercy, Purity, &c. I told him that they looked at least pacific, but that I failed to see Patience among them.

I have, &c.,
NEVILLE HENDERSON

Letter from Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
[C 8051/16/18]

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, May 28, 1939

There is one point in the account of my conversation with Göring¹ by this bag which I forgot to mention. At the end of it, when the talk took a more friendly turn, he reverted just as I was going to his old theory of friendship between Germany and England and the help which the former, as an ally, could afford to the British Empire in all parts of the world. This had always, he said, been the favourite theory of Hitler and the latter still wanted it and had reverted to it in his speech on April 28. Yet there had, complained Göring, been no single reference in our Parliament or Press to this gesture. Unfortunately, being in a hurry to go, I omitted to retort that Hitler only makes these gestures after he has just done something particularly wicked.

It is characteristic, however, of the gulf between our and the Nazi mentality, for I have no doubt that Hitler is, in fact, feeling sore over what he regards as our rejection of an advance! If I get the chance on another occasion, I shall, however, make to Göring the retorts I might have given him yesterday. There were in fact many other things which I wished to say but found no time for. Apart from the fact that I wished to see Strang and Jebb on their way through to Warsaw,² I thought it more diplomatic not to stop too long. I got the impression that Göring was pleased to see me. He certainly expressed lively regret at my not stopping longer. It is not altogether inconceivable that a visit from me helps him and there cannot be any love lost between him and Ribbentrop. In this connexion I discreetly reminded Göring yesterday that he had told me last February that, though Ribbentrop might be Minister for Foreign Affairs, nothing could be done as regards Poland and Yugoslavia without referring first to him (Göring). Though he did not take up the challenge, I think the dig went home and Göring is at least a quick thinker and sees points.

Unfortunately Ribbentrop is on the full top of the wave. Hitler lunched at the Italian Embassy on the occasion of the signing of the Italo-German military pact and Mme Attolico told me that at lunch he was very full of Ribbentrop and said more than once that he had the greatest confidence in him. She also repeated—as is common knowledge—that Göring was very much backstage just now and suggested that, since he would probably return one day to favour, I would do well to pay him a visit. (As it happens I had that morning sent him a message asking when he could receive me but it was interesting all the same.)

There was another point in my conversation with Göring which was important, if I correctly understood it. It occurred in the course of a long harangue and I was not certain afterwards whether I had got it right or not.

¹ See No. 658.

² Mr. Strang was travelling in Poland and Hungary.

But as I understood it, it was to the effect that the situation in Germany was such that things could not go on as they were and that the choice lay between either a big increase in taxation or war.

I did not get a chance of reverting to this point, (I had less than an hour with Göring and that is little when one has to deal with the spate of words in German which these Nazis produce, be it Hitler or Göring or Ribbentrop) but I did mention as one of the errors of the Prague *coup*, the fact that it prevented the visit of Oliver Stanley and Hudson³ which might have led to better things. One may be inclined to overestimate the difficulties of Germany's economic and financial position but to my mind it is at least as dangerous as the German real or professed unwillingness to believe that we will fight over Danzig.

Quite apart from the stand against aggression, the big question to my mind is whether British policy is to let Germany stew in her own juice or in other words to leave her severely alone to crash the Nazi system as we hope or to crash Europe, as we fear may be the alternative. Or is it, if Germany, realising that aggression will not pay at the moment, resorts to more pacific methods (which may only be temporary), to be ready to help her to get out of her economic difficulties in the hope that those pacific methods may be encouraged but always with the fear that the more we help her, the stronger and more obstreperous she will eventually become?

If the second, in spite of its obvious dangers, seems the best, as I admit it does on balance to me, it might be suggested to the German Government, if a truce is really called in the course of the next few weeks, that we would, if they see any useful purpose in it, be quite willing to receive Dr. Funk in London to talk over the things which Stanley might have discussed at Berlin in March.

If only we could get our Russian Agreement through, we should be on better ground to make some such conciliatory gesture, especially if the British Press can be restrained from overrating that agreement and as describing it too blatantly as a slap in the face for Hitler. Anyway it is perhaps worth considering.

As I was leaving, Göring told me that the Prince Regent of Yugoslavia would probably be stopping with him at Karinhall for a couple of nights during his visit to Berlin and asked me whether I would spend an afternoon down there with him and Prince Paul, as he knew I was a great friend of the latter. I said that I would do so with pleasure but I doubt if, when the time comes, he will be allowed to invite me. I fancy that Göring, at the back of his mind, was thinking of putting one across Ribbentrop. Curiously enough he gave me also the impression that he was afraid I would refuse. Göring is not much better than the others really but at least I feel sure that he does not want war, and hates Ribbentrop.

NEVILLE HENDERSON

³ See Volume IV of this Series, No. 266.

No. 660

*Sir P. Loraine (Rome) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 29, 2.30 p.m.)
No. 487 Telegraphic [R 4402/1/22]*

ROME, May 29, 1939, 1.15 p.m.

My telegram No. 484.¹

On thinking over my conversation with Signor Mussolini the latter made three points which I did not mention in my telegram and which I consider worth recording.

1. In speaking about guarantees given by Great Britain, the Duce described some as having been given which were even outside the sphere of our own interests.

2. When complaining about the policy of encirclement the Duce protested that neither he nor Herr Hitler had taken one square metre of our territory.

3. When talking of Anglo-Italian Agreement, he claimed that he had faithfully carried out all his promises, thus allowing me to infer that latterly Great Britain had not been carrying out hers.

¹ No. 652.

No. 661

*Mr. Osborne (The Vatican) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 29, 4.0 p.m.)
No. 32 Telegraphic [R 4409/6/22]*

THE VATICAN, May 29, 1939, 2.0 p.m.

Your telegram No. 18.¹

I have discussed the situation with the Cardinal Secretary of State. From what he said it is clear that the Pope remains anxious to do all in his power on behalf of peace. His Eminence added that everything possible should be done before any sudden crisis arose for in that case it might be too late. I gathered that the Pope had no views on the specific terms of settlement of the Polish-German issues and felt it was for others to arrive at them when he would be ready to support them at Warsaw and probably to urge Signor Mussolini to support them in Berlin. But the Cardinal indicated that it was primarily for His Majesty's Government as the guarantor of Poland (a) to enjoin all possible caution and moderation on the Polish Government in present conditions and (b) to evolve reasonable conditions for a permanent solution. In either case the Pope would give all the support in his power.

The Cardinal reverted to the Franco-Italian issue and said he had once more very recently urged on both the French and Italian Ambassadors at the Holy See early initiation of negotiations. He was satisfied that this was Signor Mussolini's desire and that settlement should be attainable. He said he believed Signor Mussolini would accept similar advice from His Majesty's Government but that the difficulty came from the French side. I am sure

¹ No. 632.

the Cardinal would like us to back the Vatican endeavour to persuade the French to open negotiations and I am also sure that this desire is not inspired by anything but the interests of European peace. And it is only reasonable that if we wish the Vatican to help towards the solution of German-Polish difficulties they should expect us to do likewise in the matter of the Franco-Italian issue.

Poland is a Catholic country and the Vatican can probably dispose of considerable influence but I doubt whether this would avail much against excited nationalism in a moment of crisis. But short of a crisis and given a readiness to negotiate on reasonable terms the Vatican influence in Warsaw might be very important factor if backed by that of His Majesty's Government and the French Government. I do not think the personal influence of General of the Jesuits would count for much.

As regards Germany I assume that the Pope's direct influence is negligible especially as any appeal to German Catholic opinion would be suppressed. But he might be able to exercise considerable indirect influence through Signor Mussolini who they are convinced at the Vatican is most anxious to avoid war. The recent alliance between the two must have established the interests and rights of each partner in the Axis in regard to foreign policy of the other and its potential results. It occurs to me therefore that if the Pope could claim to have induced Paris to open negotiations with Rome he could demand in return that Signor Mussolini should insist upon German negotiations with Poland or at least ascertain Herr Hitler's minimum terms as a first step.

No. 662

Viscount Halifax to Sir W. Seeds (Moscow)

No. 126 Telegraphic [C 7682/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 29, 1939, 2.50 p.m.

Your telegram No. 103.¹

I approve your language. M. Molotov is evidently under a complete misunderstanding as to the scope and meaning of His Majesty's Government's proposals, which are sincerely intended to provide for effective and immediate mutual support.

There is not the slightest ground for the assumption that His Majesty's Government wish to adopt League procedure. They wish to act in accordance with League *principles* and to this the Soviet Government as a member of the League surely cannot reasonably object. But His Majesty's Government are prepared to make it clear that the operation of the agreement shall not be made dependent on League *procedure*. M. Molotov is equally wrong in assuming that points 3 and 4 are intended to refer vaguely to the future or to defer conclusion of concrete arrangement. His Majesty's Government are ready to embark immediately on conversations to this end. It was felt however that it would be preferable, as in the case of the Polish and Turkish

¹ No. 648.

agreements, to lose no time in concluding an agreement in principle before elaborating the details. In this respect Soviet Government have no more reason to be suspicious than Polish or Turkish Governments who have shown no such anxiety in the matter.

Point 5 is intended to meet the susceptibilities of other Powers. However unjustified these may be they cannot be wholly disregarded. But this does not mean that His Majesty's Government wish to qualify their undertaking to give immediate and effective support and they are prepared to give Soviet Government every assurance on this point.

You should speak again to M. Molotov on above lines. His attitude is doubly disappointing in that I had understood that all the Soviet Government wanted was complete reciprocity and a guarantee of immediate effective support. This His Majesty's Government are ready to give and their proposals have no other aim.

No. 663

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax
(Received May 30, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 258 Telegraphic [R 4407/661/67]

ANGORA, May 29, 1939, 4.0 p.m.

Your telegram No. 252 to Bucharest¹ and Sir R. Hoare's telegram No. 225.²

I understand from my Roumanian colleague whom I happened to meet this morning that he has received a further telegram instructing him to urge Turkish Government to proceed no further as regards the Balkans before M. Gafencu's visit here on June 11.

Repeated to Bucharest.

¹ No. 647.

² No. 655.

No. 664

Letter from Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Mr. Kirkpatrick
[C 8065/54/18]

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, May 29, 1939

Many thanks for your letter of 25th May.¹

Is it accurate to say that 'although Hitler has a grievance it is largely self-created'? It existed long before Hitler's time and is in fact an old popular German grievance. It is that fact which makes it so dangerous.

Two paragraphs of your letter are devoted to Hitler's 'territorial demands'. Yet Beck himself asserts that they never took concrete form. Though it is fairly certain that they were more concrete than Beck pretends, and Weizsäcker tells me that they have written proof thereof, I wonder how much would have come out in the wash if the Prague *coup* had not intervened and if we had not guaranteed Poland.

¹ No. 631.

I am afraid I look at the whole question from possibly an uncomfortable but purely practical angle. Whatever Hitler said to Mr. Chamberlain about no further territorial aims, you and I at least knew that he never intended to include Danzig and Memel in any such assurance. I am not defending Hitler, who has broken his word utterly over the Czechs and thus vitiated his whole case. But I never deceived myself about Danzig and Memel, and all I ever hoped was that Danzig and Memel would be settled by pacific means. That is why I regarded, and still regard, Hitler's offer as a fair basis of negotiation, assuming—as I did—that a Free City means an unfortified one, a fact which would naturally have to be firmly established. It is not a question of being 'in the right' or 'in the wrong'. It is a question of practical possibility. Danzig is a German city and enclave of some 400,000 Germans and sooner or later Germany is not going to leave it outside the Reich. How can that certainty be reconciled with the vital interests of Poland, for which Danzig is 'Lebensraum' and for which in consequence she will equally certainly fight?

At least I am pretty confident about one thing, namely that a condominium is the worst of solutions. It leads to trouble quicker than anything else. There cannot be two kings in Brentford. As for an extra-territorial road, it is in lawyers' parlance a 'novum', but is still worth considering especially if it is made reciprocal.

To cut a long story short, I would suggest that taking Hitler's offer as the basis of a negotiation the solution I would aim at would be somewhat on the following lines:—

The Danzig enclave to be incorporated in Germany as a Free City and demilitarised area.

The Corridor to be equally demilitarised.

Poland to receive a free port area in Danzig with completely free access thereto by means of a so-called extra-territorial railway and/or road.

Germany to have an extra-territorial railway and/or road across the demilitarised Pomorze province.

There is a lot of tidying up to be done in the Corridor itself, as even I know from a visit I made two years ago to Marienwerder. But, if there is good will on both sides—which I hope though scarcely dare to believe—I do not see why a solution somewhat on these lines might not be successful. It might even last, if Poland is wise enough to make friends with Germany again. If she cannot, then it will only last just as long as Germany does not feel strong enough and the political combination in Europe not favourable enough to seize the whole Corridor and more besides without great risks.

The last is *probable* in any case, but it is at least still hypothetical and anything *may* happen. On the other hand war is one day *certain* if a solution cannot be achieved on the lines of Hitler's offer. It is for His Majesty's Government to decide whether to base policy on a probability or a certainty. There is much to say for both.

NEVILLE HENDERSON

Sir W. Seeds (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax
(Received May 30, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 105 Telegraphic [C 7758/3356/18]

MOSCOW, May 30, 1939, 3.0 a.m.

Your telegram No. 126.¹

I have just (11.45 p.m.) returned from long conversation with M. Molotov.

2. I handed him practically the whole of paragraphs 2 to 4 of your admirably clear explanation of the intentions of His Majesty's Government in regard to . . .² principles and military conversations. I think some success was achieved on former of these points and perhaps even on the latter though he was most obstinate in insisting on what he considered lack of clearness in text of our draft and on the fact that Point 4 provided for nothing more than 'consultations' . . .³ moment of danger. I urged that conclusions of military talks in June 1939 under Point 3 might well be inapplicable to unforeseen conditions of an imminent aggression in June 1940 and that it was impossible in practice to do more than we were doing namely promising immediate effective support in general and immediate military in particular.

3. He insisted on taking me through the entire text of draft (except final two points) which involved wearisome reiteration of much that we had previously discussed but he also raised at great length the question . . .⁴ States who might on Czecho-Slovak precedent come to understanding with Germany. Did we mean not to cover German absorption of such States nominally with their consent? I said neither His Majesty's Government nor British public opinion would consider imposing on independent nations guarantees of protection against their will: such guarantees would amount to menaces, not protection against aggression. He retorted by asking whether His Majesty's Government and British public opinion would remain loftily unaffected were Belgium for example to compound with Germany.

4. My impression of these two long conversations is that it is my fate to deal with a man totally ignorant of foreign affairs and to whom the idea of negotiation—as distinct from imposing the will of his party leader—is utterly alien. He has also a rather foolish cunning of the type of the peasant, as shown by his again raising fantastic argument that the words 'other Powers' in our Point 5 constituted reservation in favour of the aggressors. But I venture to hope that the more blatant misunderstandings at any rate have been somewhat cleared up.⁵

¹ No. 662.

² The text is here uncertain. It was later corrected to read 'in regard to League principles'.

³ The text is here uncertain. It was later corrected to read "'consultations" subsequent to moment of danger'.

⁴ The text is here uncertain. It was later corrected to read 'question of Baltic States'.

⁵ For a fuller account of this conversation, see No. 670.

No. 666

Sir R. Hoare (Bucharest) to Viscount Halifax
(Received May 31, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 227 Telegraphic [R 4486/661/67]

BUCHAREST, May 30, 1939, 7.55 p.m.

My telegram No. 225.¹

Secretary-General read to me this morning telegram summarized in Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen's telegram No. 250,² reply from Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs and further reply from M. Gafencu.

2. Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs' main point was surprise at Yugoslav Minister for Foreign Affairs having suggested even remote possibility of leaving Balkan Entente especially in view of the fact that there is nothing in Anglo-Turkish Agreement which violates it in spirit or in letter.

3. M. Gafencu repeated his warm approval of that Agreement and stressed the fact that his one purpose in explaining anxieties of Yugoslav Government to maintain 'independence' was to maintain solidarity of the Balkan Entente and he repeated [*sic*] that Turkish Government would be prepared to discuss with him best means of ensuring this result during his visit to Angora next month. He also repeated arguments mentioned at the end of my telegram under reference.

Repeated to Angora and Belgrade.

¹ No. 655.

² No. 633.

No. 667

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
(Received May 31, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 386 Telegraphic [C 7841/3356/18]

BERLIN, May 30, 1939, 8.20 p.m.

German press reaction to prospect of an Anglo-Soviet Pact has been remarkably cautious, indeed the newspapers have been at pains to restrict their comment to a little ridicule salted with contempt. Advantage has of course also been taken on every occasion for suggesting that British courtship of Moscow was meeting with difficulty but impression sought to be conveyed to public has been one almost of indifference to conclusion of a Soviet-British understanding.

2. This is quite well brought out in a back page editorial in Monday's (May 29) 'Angriff' which accepts Colonel Beck's proposed visit to Moscow on principle that Poland has sold herself to Great Britain and that 'he who travels to London under present political circumstances must also travel to Moscow' . . . 'of course it is a matter of indifference to us whither Herr Beck turns his steps' . . . and so on, ending with a warning to Poland of the consequences of her changed policy.

3. On the other hand the apparently inspired statement put out to foreign

press and reported in my telegram No. 214 Saving¹ shows fairly clearly that there is anxiety in Government and party circles and that an effort will be made to provide some counter-blast as soon as Anglo-Soviet Pact comes to fruition. Opinion is being worked up against encircling policy of His Majesty's Government but it is plainly no part of the plan to make encirclement appear too real or effective. Hence the invariable emphasis in [*sic* ? on] adequate strength of Axis and hence deliberate minimising of Russian factor.

4. It is also striking that, as has been the case for the last eighteen months, there are no attacks on Russia, which would seem to imply that hope is still entertained of keeping her out of the coalition.

Repeated to Warsaw, Moscow, Paris and Rome.

¹ Not printed. This telegram reported a communiqué issued by the 'Deutsches Nachrichten Büro' on May 25.

No. 668

Minute by Mr. Kirkpatrick

[C 7827/15/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 30, 1939

M. Cambon showed me on May 26 a long despatch from the French Ambassador in Berlin,¹ reporting that von Ribbentrop, in his desire to destroy this country, was pressing hard for an understanding with Russia. According to M. Coulondre, Herr Hitler had not yet agreed, but von Ribbentrop—with characteristic obstinacy—had not given up hope.

M. Cambon asked what I thought of this report. I said that we had received information from two different sources recently to the effect that Ribbentrop claimed to be about to inflict a signal diplomatic defeat on England. It had been suggested that he was referring to some agreement with Russia, and this possibility had always to be borne in mind. Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to imagine that a Russo-German agreement could be so easily concluded as some people in Germany thought. It did not necessarily follow that when the Germans were ready for an agreement, the Russians would at once fall in with their wishes.

I. KIRKPATRICK

¹ The reference may be to a report by M. Coulondre dated May 22, printed in the French Yellow Book, op. cit., No. 127.

No. 669

Note from the French Embassy¹ (Received May 30)

[R 4520/661/67]

AMBASSADE DE FRANCE, A LONDRES, le 30 mai 1939

M. Massigli a fait savoir le 26 de ce mois à M. Georges Bonnet que l'Ambassadeur de Roumanie à Ankara avait été chargé de mettre le Ministre

¹ This note was communicated to the Foreign Office by M. Cambon.

des Affaires Étrangères turc au courant de la conversation Gafenco-Marcovitch du dimanche 21 mai.

Selon les renseignements fournis à l'Ambassadeur de France tant par M. Saracoglu que par l'Ambassadeur de Roumanie, l'hostilité du Ministre des Affaires Étrangères yougoslave à l'égard du pacte anglo-turc n'aurait pas diminué. Accusant la Turquie d'avoir contrevenu aux principes du Pacte balkanique, M. Marcovitch affirmerait qu'il convient maintenant aux États des Balkans de travailler à maintenir cet acte.

Ce serait pour calmer son collègue et éviter qu'il ne prenne des initiatives intempestives que M. Gafenco lui aurait promis d'intervenir à Ankara afin que le gouvernement turc limite sa collaboration avec les Puissances Occidentales à la zone méditerranéenne et ne prenne aucun engagement portant sur les Balkans.

Selon M. Massigli, M. Saracoglu aurait assez mal accueilli la communication de M. Stoica et aurait réservé la réponse de son gouvernement. Il aurait cependant fait aussitôt observer à l'Ambassadeur de Roumanie :

1^o) que la Turquie n'avait manqué à aucune de ses obligations du Pacte balkanique.

2^o) que jadis la Yougoslavie n'avait pas cru aller à l'encontre de ce pacte en traitant avec la Bulgarie sans consulter ni même prévenir les autres membres de l'Entente.

3^o) qu'il était étrange que la Yougoslavie qui ne trouvait rien à objecter à l'alliance militaire italo-allemande et qui acceptait sans protester l'occupation de l'Albanie ne s'émût qu'en présence d'un acte qui était précisément de nature à accroître la sécurité dans les Balkans.

4^o) qu'il appartenait au surplus au gouvernement yougoslave de s'adresser lui-même à Ankara.

Dans ces conditions, a ajouté M. Saracoglu, tout ce que le gouvernement turc pourrait faire afin de ne pas trop accroître les embarras de M. Marcovitch serait d'attendre après le retour du Prince Paul de Berlin en juin pour étendre aux Balkans l'accord déjà intervenu pour la Méditerranée; mais il ne pouvait être question pour la Turquie de renoncer au plan déjà annoncé.

M. Saracoglu a prié le 26 mai le Ministre de Turquie à Belgrade de dire à M. Marcovitch que M. Gafenco avait communiqué à Ankara le résultat des dernières délibérations roumano-yougoslaves et que la réponse turque serait donnée à Bucarest.

No. 670

Sir W. Seeds (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 3)

No. 161 [C 7939/3356/18]

MOSCOW, May 30, 1939

My Lord,

In accordance with Your Lordship's telegram No. 126¹ of yesterday I

¹ No. 662.

immediately requested an interview with M. Molotov, who received me in the Kremlin at 10.30 the same evening. M. Potemkin was not present on this occasion, but a satisfactory interpreter was provided.

2. I handed to M. Molotov a Russian translation of practically the entire text of paragraphs 2 to 4 of your telegram, and said that this clear statement should be sufficient to remove the misunderstandings which had marked our last interview. We went carefully through it, and I think it carried conviction to a great extent so far as the allusions to the League Covenant were concerned. I need not trouble Your Lordship with a detailed report on this part of the conversation which was on sadly familiar lines. The only new point raised was that, according to M. Molotov, His Majesty's Government had been at pains last year at Geneva to improve or modify procedure under Article 16, which must therefore be one of considerable—and therefore suspicious—importance. But he seemed satisfied when I pointed out that a desire to improve the general shape of an instrument one year did not imply any intention to use that instrument a year later in totally altered conditions.

3. As regards military conversations M. Molotov gradually became less suspicious of the honesty of our intentions. But he still went on maintaining the necessity for an immediate concrete arrangement. He frankly repeated what M. Litvinov had said to me weeks ago that the Franco-Soviet Pact had turned out to be merely a paper delusion;² experience in that respect had taught the Soviet Government the absolute necessity in practice to conclude, simultaneously, both a political and a military agreement. I asked him whether his Government had really thought out the implications of this contention in the present case. Military conversations for negotiating such a concrete agreement would have to cover an enormous stretch of frontier, the co-ordination of assistance by air, land and naval forces on a gigantic scale, questions of supplies and transport, and above all an examination of the delicate problems affecting military assistance to and in the neighbouring countries, each of whom had their own individual wishes and, I would add, suspicions. A concrete agreement was, I said, doubtless possible, but it could quite certainly not be immediate. What was, in fact, possible was the immediate initiation of military conversations which we were offering them here and now.

4. I had meant the conversation to stop at this point, but he insisted that our last interview had not exhausted the questions to be considered, especially that of our insistence on assuming the protection only of such States as desired our aid. Take, he said, a case such as that of Czecho-Slovakia whose President, contrary to the national will, had delivered his country into the hands of Germany: nominally, Czecho-Slovakia had not asked for assistance against aggression, but, in fact, she had not only been a victim of aggression, but would also have welcomed aid from outside. Was British policy, as interpreted by our draft agreement, directed to allowing such aggression to proceed with no regard to neighbouring States who might find the aggressor on their frontier? The Soviet Union could not view with equanimity the

² See No. 201.

prospect of Germany appearing in such circumstances within a few miles of Leningrad.

5. I said that an aggressor appearing on the Soviet frontier would, under our proposals, have to reckon with our immediate assistance to this country were he to proceed further. But as regards the general principle to which he had alluded, I said bluntly that neither His Majesty's Government nor British public opinion were prepared to consider forcing guarantees of protection on independent nations which did not desire them; such unwanted guarantees were menaces, not assurances of protection; we had adhered to that principle from the outset, and any change in that attitude would be repugnant to the fundamental spirit of the British people.

6. M. Molotov retorted that we might well argue in that spirit where the Baltic States were concerned, but he was quite convinced that in the case of Belgium, for instance, compounding with Germany the British Government and people would not remain loftily indifferent. Would we keep aloof until the aggressor had reached the shores of Belgium as being the British frontier? Or within 10 kilom. of the sea? I said that it was impossible to foresee, and fruitless to discuss, what might happen, or how public opinion would react, in what I thought most improbable circumstances. Personally I thought that States, which in times of peace were inclined, for historical and other reasons, to hesitate asking for Soviet assistance, would take a different line when actually menaced by German aggression. And I begged M. Molotov to consider the effect on world opinion if the Soviet Union, whose leader had proclaimed the principle of supporting victims of aggression, were to be held up to opprobrium by malevolent propaganda as something not far from an aggressor itself. M. Molotov protested the firm adherence of the Soviet Union to the principle announced by M. Stalin and to that of peace and international amity, but he argued at length and with emphasis that the question at issue was vital to his Government.

7. From this high level (high in the sense that from the Soviet point of view it presented a reasonable argument) the conversation relapsed into wranglings on what M. Molotov considered the lack of clearness of the wording of our draft. The exact amount of assistance implied by the words 'in its power' (Points 1 and 2), the remarkable concession to the rights of the aggressor under Point 5, the clear allusion to the Greek Kalends in Point 4 with its talk of 'consultation' and 'further discussion', were again debated on the lines of those pursued in our interview on the 27th May.³

8. Point 6 of our draft was not touched on. With that exception I felt, on leaving M. Molotov, that the ground had been thoroughly explored and that there was some reason to hope that the grosser misunderstandings had been in a measure cleared up. But the question of German aggression through the Baltic States constitutes a fundamental difference between the Anglo-French and Soviet points of view, which mere argument may well be unable to remove.

I have, &c.,

WILLIAM SEEDS

³ See Nos. 648 and 657.

Letter from Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax
[C 8046/16/18]

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, May 30, 1939

Since I drafted my despatch¹ and letter² to you about my visit to Göring, I have received and read your despatch³ recording a private conversation with von Dirksen. If I may say so, though you express yourself far better than I do (it is also easier in English than in German which is my fate), your language was identical with that which I use to all and sundry. Though I have not seen Keitel or Brauchitsch (I asked them to lunch but both found excuses for not coming), I have had occasion to see a number of other generals lately, including the Chief of the General Staff, and to speak to them in the sense of your telegram No. 150.⁴ Also of course Göring, whose reactions I describe in a despatch.

2. But it is paragraph 10 of your despatch which interests me, namely as to how Anglo-German relations can be improved. As you will see, or have seen, from my letter of May 28, I tentatively suggested that if the situation did clear up, I might give the German Government a hint that a visit to England by Funk would be acceptable to us.

3. That suggestion might fit in with yours about a speech by Hitler announcing his willingness to seek solutions in future by negotiation. If I see Göring next week, when Prince Paul is here, I shall of course repeat your remarks to Dirksen about a speech and at the same time drop the suggestion re Funk, provided you agree to the latter.⁵

4. The trouble is, as is also mentioned in my letter of May 28, Hitler's idea of holding out an olive branch is different from ours. He apparently regarded references in his speech of April 20 [28] to the British Empire as such and was hurt because they produced no response in England. In that connection I can make it very clear to Göring why they did not.

5. I am sure that Göring and Funk both want better relations with Britain for the simple reason that they are vital to Germany's prosperity and economy, for which they are principally responsible. I am even prepared to believe that Hitler does so also for his own reasons which I would not like to explore. And one is always back at the fact that one cannot possibly rely on any engagement of his once he ceases to regard it as in Germany's interests.

6. Moreover can Hitler make the sort of speech you suggest? Will he not be afraid of the world, as well of his own people, saying that he has been overawed by the combination against him? He will also say: 'I held out a hand on April 28 and nobody paid any attention to it.' However unreasonable that is apparently what he thinks. The trouble is whether, even if he

¹ No. 658.

² No. 659.

³ No. 559.

⁴ No. 431.

⁵ Lord Halifax did not agree with the suggestion that Dr. Funk should be invited to England.

would like to (which I certainly cannot guarantee), he can at this moment make such a speech?

7. If this is so (and I can see his difficulties as well as our own), might he not be helped to do it by something you or the Prime Minister might say first? What I have in my mind (quite tentatively I admit, since I do not wish to weaken our attitude though, if only Russia would make up her mind, this also might be easier) is an answer to some more or less violent attack on Germany in the House to which the Prime Minister might reply something on the lines of a reference to Hitler's conciliatory remarks in his Reichstag speech and adding that Britain has no aggressive designs against Germany either as an [*sic*] European Power nor as a legitimate economic competitor and that, provided she refrains from further aggression, we have every reason to wish to live in peace and amity with her.

8. I may have an opportunity of speaking to Göring next on June 7 or 8.

NEVILE HENDERSON

No. 672

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax

(Received May 31, 3.45 p.m.)

No. 262 Telegraphic [R 4493/661/67]

ANGORA, May 31, 1.10 p.m.

My telegram No. 250¹ and Sir R. Hoare's telegram No. 225² and my telegram No. 258.³

I asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs on May 30 whether he could tell me anything more about M. Gafencu's attitude to the Turco-British Declaration in so far as it concerned the Balkans.

2. He promised to communicate to me his answer to the Roumanian representations as reported in my telegram No. 250 and he said that he proposed to wait and discuss the whole matter with M. Gafencu when he comes here.

3. He said that his telegram to Belgrade referred to in paragraph 7 of my telegram No. 249⁴ had been sent before he received the representations reported in my telegram No. 250. In the light of those representations he had feared that his telegram had appeared unduly forthcoming. He had therefore telegraphed again more outspokenly as regards M. Markovitch's attitude. He had received a reply to the effect that M. Gafencu's description of M. Markovitch's views as reported in my telegram No. 250 was not accurate and that M. Markovitch had asked no one to represent them to the Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs. The Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs was therefore considerably puzzled to know the real truth.

4. Meanwhile M. Gafencu had similarly approached the Greek Government and had received the reply that M. Metaxas entirely approved and supported the Turkish policy.

¹ No. 633.

² No. 655.

³ No. 663.

⁴ No. 626.

5. I said between him and me, I thought that you were a little annoyed at Roumanian attitude and that I found it hard to understand why Roumanian Government should wish to impede the development of an arrangement which was entirely to their own advantage.

Repeated to Bucharest, Athens and Belgrade.

No. 673

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax
(Received May 31, 2.55 p.m.)
No. 216 Telegraphic [R 4490/7/22]

PARIS, May 31, 1939, 1.40 p.m.

Your telegram No. 232 Saving.¹

In view of Sir P. Loraine's account of his interview with Signor Mussolini as given in his telegrams Nos. 483, 484 and 485,² I do not propose to act on instructions in your telegram under reply until hearing further from Your Lordship.

2. It seems to me that we should thereby risk upsetting French without any chance of inducing Signor Mussolini to demobilize.

Repeated to Rome.

¹ No. 650.

² Nos. 651-3.

No. 674

Mr. Orde (Riga) to Viscount Halifax (Received May 31, 2.0 p.m.)
No. 17 Telegraphic [C 7850/3356/18]

RIGA, May 31, 1939, 1.48 p.m.

Your telegram No. 23.¹

Owing to the holidays I was only able to . . .² Minister for Foreign Affairs yesterday. He seemed content on a first perusal, but merely said he would study formula. He asked whether the same communication had been made to the Finnish and Lithuanian Governments. I said 'No' as regards the latter but . . .² clearly 'yes' as regards Finland. Please correct if necessary.

¹ No. 635.

² The text is here uncertain.

No. 675

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax
(Received May 31, 4.50 p.m.)
No. 184 Telegraphic [C 7887/54/18]

WARSAW, May 31, 1939, 2.22 p.m.

I read to Colonel Beck the gist of your telegram No. 180¹ on May 27. Minister for Foreign Affairs said he was much impressed by the importance

¹ No. 636.

of the considerations adduced, which he would like to think over during the week-end. On May 30 he let me know that he had prepared an answer which his Chef de Cabinet would read to Counsellor. Following is an almost verbatim transcription.

2. Colonel Beck is grateful for your message and entirely agrees that everything should be done to prevent German Government from taking irrevocable decisions about Danzig which might lead to war. Polish Government has always given proof of extreme prudence with a view to avoidance of being drawn into a precipitate decision by repeated provocation of Danzig Nazis. This was shown in the case of recent incident when Polish Customs Inspectors were attacked by a crowd led by uniformed Nazi officials.

3. Colonel Beck agrees that an exchange of views between Poland and Great Britain, in case of a unilateral attempt to change the international status of Danzig, is necessary. It is, however, impossible, here and now, to foresee all eventualities which might confront Poland in such a case. He entirely agrees that if such violation of the Statute should be of a kind to permit delay in the application of military measures by Poland, without compromising the general military situation of Poland, common pressure on Germany should be attempted.

4. He would be grateful if you could state more exactly what preparatory military measures His Majesty's Government would envisage in order to reinforce any *démarche* at Berlin. In Colonel Beck's view such measures should (1) leave no doubt in German minds as to British intention to support Poland with all its forces in defence of Polish vital interests; and (2) reassure Polish public opinion and remove any suspicion that diplomatic intervention of Great Britain might end in proposing a compromise unacceptable to Poland.

5. Colonel Beck considers that concerted action with Great Britain and, if possible, France would be desirable but he would draw attention to the difficulties arising from the fact that Danzig is situated at a particularly exposed point of Polish frontier and that this town in great measure controls Polish communications. He adds that co-operation of Soviet in any *démarche* might make it more difficult for Germany to be reasonable, and in any case he wishes to reserve the possibility of expressing an opinion on this point.

Repeated to Berlin.

No. 676

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw)

No. 187 Telegraphic [C 7771/54/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 31, 1939, 7.0 p.m.

Your telegram No. 49 Saving.¹

1. Paragraph 6. You are authorised to put the idea to Colonel Beck. If he takes to the idea and considers High Commissioner might try to further it in Berlin, he will no doubt communicate direct with M. Burckhardt.

¹ No. 656.

2. Paragraph 7. Affirmative reply being sent through His Majesty's Consul General, Danzig.²

Repeated to Berlin.

² Mr. Shepherd was instructed on May 31 to inform M. Burckhardt that Mr. Makin would arrive in Basle on June 11.

No. 677

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax

(Received June 1, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 185 Telegraphic [C 7889/54/18]

WARSAW, May 31, 1939, 8.52 p.m.

My telegram No. 184.¹

I doubt whether military authorities would allow Colonel Beck to go further than he has done in assurances.

2. He has explained to me that the interval between a German move and the necessity for appropriate Polish counter action might be so small that the delay involved in consultation might endanger Polish military position in the Corridor. Possibly this aspect could be examined in any further staff conversations.

3. He has also indicated special importance attached here to (2) in paragraph 4 of my telegram under reference. He feels that public opinion would be anxious if diplomatic moves involved delay in Poland taking appropriate measures, unless military measures by the Western Powers convinced the Poles that a compromise detrimental to Poland was ruled out.

4. Any symptom of lack of confidence between Poland and the Western Powers would be seized upon by German propaganda which would also endeavour by provoking incidents to put Poland in the wrong; and possibly by stirring up trouble in the Ukraine to create internal unrest. Present united front in Poland and calm confidence in herself and her 'allies' is presumably the greatest deterrent to any rash German action.

¹ No. 675.

No. 678

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 1)

No. 223 Saving: Telegraphic [R 4517/57/22]

BERLIN, May 31, 1939

Rome telegram No. 176 Saving.¹

Though there was much talk at the beginning of May of a German *coup* in Danzig and though it was known that a number of S.S. men had been drafted into the city, I am not inclined to believe that Herr von Ribbentrop mentioned any precise date, though he may well have spoken to Count Ciano of the possibility of a *coup* some time later with a view to ascertaining what the Italian Government's reaction would be.

¹ No. 598.

2. Before the visit took place the Italian Ambassador (whose name should not be mentioned) assured me that nothing sensational would occur during the meeting. In explaining the military alliance away after the meeting he described it as 50-50 pressure on France and reply to our Turkish negotiations which were a first-class blow to Italy as much or more than to Germany. My own belief is that this explanation is probably fairly near the mark and that to that extent the initiative in finally deciding upon the military agreement came from the Italian side, though Germany has always pressed for it.

3. The one good point in the agreement has always seemed to me to be Article 1 which provides for consultation on all points affecting common interests or 'the European situation as a whole'. I agree with Sir P. Loraine in attaching the greatest importance to this Article. I would not however like to say for certain who paid the price for its insertion. It may as well have been Germany, in order to get the full alliance which she wanted, as Signor Mussolini in return for accepting it. In any case it is a belated check on Germany, who as Sir P. Loraine points out has hitherto always acted without consulting her partner, as a clear indication that Italy in the future will not give Germany any more blank cheques.

4. Quite apart from Italy being a check on Germany in peace time and a possible handicap in war, it has always been my conviction that all talk in the Press and elsewhere about breaking or weakening the Axis is extremely harmful. Not only is Signor Mussolini extremely sensitive to it but the effect is just the opposite to that desired. Italy will never leave the Axis before the outbreak of war though she might then if it were over a matter of purely German interest. In the meantime and in peace time it is far too valuable to her. She may be subservient to Germany, but if she joined the London-Paris Axis she would play their [*sic* ? third] fiddle instead of second or a bad first. Without the backing of Germany she can never be a real Mediterranean Power. Moreover if she left the Axis, the questions of South Tyrol and Trieste would at once become actualities.

Repeated to Paris and Rome.

No. 679

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 2)

No. 51 Saving: Telegraphic [C 7929/54/18]

WARSAW, May 31, 1939

Danzig despatch No. 121¹ and my telegram No. 171.²

Official Polish Telegraph Agency communiqué today announces that Polish Commissioner-General at Danzig has addressed a letter in reply to protest of Danzig Senate regarding Kalthof incident.

¹ Not printed. This despatch enclosed several documents on the Kalthof incident, including a translation of the protest of the Danzig Senate to the Polish Commissioner-General.

² No. 579.

2. Letter, according to communiqué, begins by declaring that full responsibility for incident lies with Danzig authorities, who despite repeated representations have taken no steps to prevent criminal disturbances and ensure public order and safety of Polish officials in Danzig territory. Polish Government, it continues, can discern no shortcomings on part of M. Perkowski and other Polish officials concerned. Recall of latter is a matter solely for decision of Polish Government who cannot admit that Danzig Senate should formulate demands in this respect. Should Senate really be prepared to remove tension, Commissioner-General is ready to discuss methods and steps to assist in improving atmosphere which has been created, to ensure possibility of normal work by Polish officials on Danzig territory and to improve latter's relations with Danzig authorities.

Repeated to Berlin and Danzig.

No. 680

Letter from Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Sir A. Cadogan

[C 8057/1110/55]

BRITISH EMBASSY, WARSAW, *May 31, 1939*

I apologise for returning to the charge about the question of financial and economic assistance to Poland, and it may be that this letter is unnecessary. But the fact is that the Poles were definitely disappointed at the several weeks' delay in answering Beck's tentative enquiry as to whether in principle we were prepared to help them, and secondly at the nature of the reply. I gather that in the meantime they had approached the French, and were very favourably impressed by the reception of their enquiry in Paris, especially, if I may so put it, by the evident desire of France to do something and to do it quickly.

From the Polish point of view the present situation is one of the utmost gravity for the future of their own country and of Europe. They feel confident that the anti-aggression front will win if the worst comes to the worst, but they cherish the hope that early and adequate defensive preparations might, firstly, dissuade the Axis Powers from attacking the weakest point, i.e. Poland, or, secondly, attenuate and shorten the sufferings caused by a war.

I suppose that in all probability Poland will be the first and principal objective of any knock-out blow, and in a way it amounts to a General Staff question as to where and how the 'allied' forces can best be disposed.

On this Eastern Front there is no Maginot or Siegfried Line, but Poland possesses an almost unlimited supply of trained man-power. Their ability to put and keep in the field up to perhaps 3 million trained men (a figure my French colleague has obtained from a Polish source) is only limited by questions of material. As the Poles somewhat wryly say: Polish soldiers are what we have to sell, and they are very cheap.

They realise that they will be cut off in the early days of a war, and so they ask for help now while communications are still open, but time is precious, if these men are to be put into the field with all the munitions and auxiliary services they need.

There may be differences of opinion as to the proper use of any money we can provide for Poland, i.e. whether it should be used to buy material and arms ready made or to equip factories for future production in case the war is prolonged. Of that I am not competent to speak.

But I can say that there is very little corruption here and that, subject to the above strategic proviso, any money should be well spent, especially if some direction is given by competent British quarters.

Another point that the Poles stress is that if a Polish economic mission goes to London and comes back comparatively empty-handed, the Axis Powers will have cause for unholy glee. One can imagine the use that the propaganda machines of 'bankrupt' Germany and Italy would make of such a state of affairs. I should emphasise that such Polish officials as have mentioned their disappointment have stressed that whether we are able substantially to help or not is entirely for us to judge, and that it will make no difference to their political fidelity to the anti-aggression front.

I suppose that the Poles will have realised in the course of the Staff conversations, if they had not done so before, that if war comes we shall not be able to help them directly in a military sense; I mean that though we might draw away from Poland powerful German forces, we should not be able to send them ships, aeroplanes, men or munitions. Of course we *might* use this argument to reinforce the desirability of an arrangement with the Soviets. To discuss the Polish attitude to Soviet help would lead me too far for the purposes of this letter, but I would repeat that it is *our* help that the Poles would like to have and it is with the Democracies and not with the Soviets that they wish to be publicly identified.

I fear that unless help is forthcoming they may be driven to unsatisfactory financial measures leading towards inflation, and, subject to what our military mission have to say, I would point out that they have here well-planned factories for producing the sinews of war, which are at present held up for lack of finances.

I again apologise for this letter, but I was moved to write it, partly by your telegram regarding the contract given to the French for the grid system.¹ If I may say so I thought it a little hard of us to reproach the Poles on this score, considering the great debt of gratitude they owe to the French, and in view of the facts given in my Saving telegram No. 50 of May 30.²

H. W. KENNARD

¹ Not printed. This telegram of May 25 instructed Sir H. Kennard to protest at the treatment alleged to have been received by a British company during negotiations for a contract for the construction of power stations in Poland. The contract was given to a French company.

² Not printed.

Sir W. Seeds (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 1, 3.0 p.m.)
No. 109 Telegraphic [C 7895/3356/18]

MOSCOW, June 1, 1939, 1.45 p.m.

My immediately preceding telegram.¹

I beg to submit my considered views on present position as follows :

2. Our draft agreement as it stands gives the Soviet Government all reciprocity that they are entitled to expect and offers them terms quite sufficiently generous—in fact almost more generous than the Soviet Union's possible assistance is in practice worth to us. On this last point please see enclosure in my despatch No. 81.²

3. Soviet assistance is not worth purchasing at the price of extra hostility on the part of the Baltic States and other countries (not to mention the effect on British and probably American public opinion) which we should earn by yielding to the Soviet demands for what amounts to compulsory guarantees imposed on States who violently object to Soviet help. I beg reference to the views on this subject which I expressed to M. Molotov as reported in my despatch No. 161³ (now on its way to you) and which I strongly hold.

4. There are some grounds for believing that the Soviet Government are ready to join us though naturally anxious to extract the maximum terms if possible. In that case they will accept our present proposal with minor amendments on such points as the allusion to the League of Nations on condition that we tell them firmly that it represents our limit. They are hard bargainers and must be met in similar spirit which is the only one they really understand.

5. If, on the other hand, as many observers here believe, they are playing with us and are really out for isolation, no further concessions on our part will serve any useful purpose except to German propaganda.

6. As regards the risk of their compounding with Germany in the political sphere I have never thought it more than just a possibility at any time and I now think that the Soviet Union is sufficiently covered by our commitments in the matter of Poland and Roumania and Turkey to remove any serious temptation to indulge in so remarkable a *volte face* if our present negotiations broke down. We would probably find ourselves confronted by Soviet-German commercial and economic negotiations but judging by M. Molotov's speech we may expect this in any case so far as the Russians are concerned in spite of the Soviet press attacks on us whenever we do anything but boycott the Axis Powers.

¹ Not printed. This telegram contained a translation of extracts from M. Molotov's speech to the Supreme Council of the U.S.S.R. on May 31, for which No. 689 was later substituted.

² See Volume IV of this Series, No. 183.

³ No. 670.

No. 682

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 1, 4.15 p.m.)
No. 217 Telegraphic [C 7916/3356/18]

PARIS, June 1, 1939, 2.20 p.m.

Minister for Foreign Affairs told me this morning that he had just received a telegram from French Ambassador at Moscow reporting his first conversation yesterday with Molotov.

2. M. Naggiar derived the impression that the chief difficulty will be the desire of the Soviet Government that three Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia, Finland) should receive the same guarantee as Poland and Roumania. M. Molotov even indicated that Russia would be quite ready to extend this guarantee to Lithuania although the latter was not a border State.

3. M. Molotov further declared that Russia would be compelled to 'come to the assistance' of any of these States even though that 'assistance' were not requested, for instance, if one or more of them were to sell itself to Germany, and admit German troops without resisting.

4. M. Bonnet says that this conversation was not a strictly official one, and that an official reply from the Soviet Government will come in due course but he thinks it will be on the above lines. His Excellency feels that it is necessary for Great Britain and France to reach an agreement with Russia, but that they must be careful not to allow themselves to be dragged into war by the latter.

5. M. Molotov implied that the present negotiations meant that Franco-Soviet Pact was put into cold storage.

6. M. Naggiar denied that but said if that were so it was only an additional reason for reaching a rapid agreement.

Repeated to Moscow.

No. 683

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 1, 4.15 p.m.)
No. 218 Telegraphic [R 4524/7/22]

PARIS, June 1, 1939, 2.20 p.m.

I asked Minister for Foreign Affairs what impression French Ambassador had derived from conversation which he was reported in the Press to have had with Count Ciano on May 30.

2. M. Bonnet replied Count Ciano had seemed to be ill at ease and had expressed very strong objection to our pact with Turkey and to our negotiations with Russia. No progress at all had been made with Franco-Italian conversation.

3. M. Bonnet asked about Sir Percy Loraine's conversation with Signor Mussolini.¹ I did not go into details but said that the Duce had been civil although not cordial, and had expressed the same objections as Count Ciano.

Repeated to Rome.

¹ See Nos. 651-3.

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora)
No. 216 Telegraphic [R 4511/661/67]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *June 1, 1939, 7.30 p.m.*

My immediately preceding telegram.¹

Following is text of draft of the interim understanding for consideration by the Turkish Government. Begins:

Whereas His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom declared on 13th April, 1939, that, in the event of any action being taken which clearly threatened the independence of Greece or Roumania and which the Greek or Roumanian Governments respectively considered it vital to resist with their national forces, His Majesty's Government would feel themselves bound at once to lend the Greek or Roumanian Government, as the case might be, all the support in their power;

And whereas His Majesty's Government and the Turkish Government are desirous of developing further certain of the mutual undertakings contained in the joint Anglo-Turkish Declaration of the 12th May;

His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom and the Turkish Government have agreed as follows:

Article 1.

In the event of an act of aggression leading to a war in the Mediterranean area which involved Greece and in which His Majesty's Government came to the assistance of Greece under their above-mentioned declaration of 13th April, 1939, the Turkish Government will for their part lend to the Greek Government all aid and assistance in their power. The Turkish Government will give the Greek Government a direct undertaking to this effect.

Article 2.

If circumstances arise which bring the guarantee given by His Majesty's Government to Roumania into operation, the Turkish Government will for their part lend to the Roumanian Government all aid and assistance in their power and will give the Roumanian Government a direct undertaking to this effect.

Article 3.

The Turkish Government and His Majesty's Government agree that conversations should take place between experts on either side to consider how the mutual co-operation, aid and assistance between Turkey and the United Kingdom which results from the joint Declaration of May 12 and from the present Agreement can best be carried out.

¹ No. 687. These telegrams were despatched in reverse order.

No. 685

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax

(Received June 2, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 187 Telegraphic [C 7927/54/18]

WARSAW, *June 1, 1939, 7.40 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 187.¹

I submitted the idea this morning to M. Beck who did not seem favourably impressed with it, at any rate in its present form. He said that he sympathized with any effort which could be made to ease present tension but he objected more especially to phrase 'radical solution of Danzig question' as he thought this might encourage Germany to feel that a radical solution might be sought in the not very distant future. I suggested that some alternative wording could be found and that in general it was merely a suggestion which could be modified to suit views of both parties.

2. M. Beck thought that it was advisable in the first instance to await outcome of any conversations which M. Burckhardt might have in Berlin and which might give some indication of present German attitude. He thought object (? of Germans)² at present was to demonstrate that our support of Polish case over Danzig would soon weaken and that then it would be possible for Germany to annex Danzig without serious complications.

3. I have heard from some of my colleagues that German Ambassador here is holding language of this nature to them.

Repeated to Berlin.

¹ No. 676.

² This suggested emendation was made in the Foreign Office.

No. 686

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax

(Received June 1, 10.15 p.m.)

No. 268 Telegraphic [R 4553/661/67]

ANGORA, *June 1, 1939, 9.1 p.m.*

My telegram No. 262,¹ paragraph 3.

Following is substance of Minister of Foreign Affairs' reply to Roumanian representations.

2. After thanking Roumanian Minister for Foreign Affairs for his efforts towards maintenance of solidarity of Balkan Entente, Minister for Foreign Affairs expresses regret that at a moment when Balkan solidarity is of great importance M. Markovitch should have spoken of possibility of circumstances arising in which Yugoslavia would be unable to follow her allies. Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs suggests that some misunderstanding must exist as regards clause 6 of Turco-British Declaration. There has in fact never

¹ No. 672.

been any question of drawing the Balkan Entente into any political combination even a combination solely directed against aggression.

[3.] Allusion to Balkan (? security)² is in connexion with Turco-British assistance and in no way threatens independence of any of Balkan States in regard to conduct of general policy. Moreover Turkey would not consider herself competent to enter into an engagement covering her Balkan allies either directly or indirectly.

4. Minister for Foreign Affairs expresses his disagreement with point of view that Turco-British Agreement is contrary to decisions of Council of Balkan Entente. It is strictly in conformity with spirit of Balkan Pact which itself is designed to reject any idea of aggression and even goes so far as to envisage sanctions against any member of the Pact guilty of an act of aggression.

5. Minister for Foreign Affairs rebuts argument that Anglo-Turkish Agreement can have effect of alienating political independence of Balkan Entente. That Entente has always existed parallel with engagements entered into previously or subsequently by various members of Entente with or without knowledge and consent of the others.

6. Turkish Government considers that in entering into an agreement designed to prevent or resist eventual aggression it has loyally served interests of its allies and consolidated Balkan Pact.

7. Finally Minister for Foreign Affairs assures M. Gafencu as President of Balkan Entente Council that conclusion of definitive agreement with Great Britain will not take place before journey of Prince Regent and M. Markovitch to Berlin.

Repeated to Bucharest, Athens and Belgrade.

² The text is here uncertain.

No. 687

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora)

No. 215 Telegraphic [R 4511/661/67]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *June 1, 1939, 10.0 p.m.*

Your telegrams Nos. 238¹ and 253.²

I have carefully studied the points made by the Minister for Foreign Affairs in his communication to you and I hope that the draft for the interim understanding contained in my immediately following telegram³ will be found to be in harmony with the attitude of the Turkish Government, subject to the comments made below.

2. As regards Greece, while alive to the considerations in paragraph 3 of

¹ No. 549.

² Not printed. See No. 641, note 1.

³ No. 684.

your telegram,⁴ it seems to us that what is essential at this stage is to ensure that both Great Britain and Turkey should give direct guarantees to Greece and that the operation of these guarantees should coincide in all respects. Article 1 of the draft interim agreement, therefore, provides for a direct guarantee by Turkey to Greece, but stipulates that it shall only come into operation in the event of it being necessary for His Majesty's Government to implement the direct guarantee which they have given to Greece. In thus inviting Turkey to give a direct guarantee to Greece, we are asking her to undertake no further obligation than she has already indirectly assumed as a result of the Anglo-Turkish Declaration.

3. Another reason why it may be valuable to define in the written agreement our mutual obligations towards Greece is that the knowledge that these guarantees have been laid down in a clear and precise form may, in the case of foreign aggression, strengthen the will of Greece to resist that aggression.

4. For your own information, an argument that has influenced us in including the clause about Greece in the draft has been to facilitate the introduction of the much more essential similar clause about Roumania, which admittedly involves asking Turkey to assume an obligation which to some extent goes beyond what we know to be her present commitments.

5. As regards Roumania, it is from our point of view very important that Turkey should give Roumania a direct guarantee, since it is only when Turkey is a belligerent that Great Britain and France will be able fully to implement their guarantee to Roumania by rendering direct and effective assistance to that country by way of the Dardanelles. In addition, the argument in paragraph 3 in favour of direct guarantees also applies in the case of Roumania.

6. It will be noted that Article 2 of the draft interim understanding specifies, as in the case of Greece, that no further undertaking which Turkey may assume as regards Roumania can come into operation unless and until our own guarantee equally comes into operation. There is accordingly no question of any risk, as suggested in paragraphs 9 and 10 of your telegram No. 253,⁵ of Turkey finding herself involved in isolated resistance against Germany or another Power.

7. I do not anticipate any difficulty in meeting the Minister for Foreign Affairs' point as to excluding the case of Russian aggression from Turkey's obligations to Roumania. This point can probably best be met eventually by a separate exchange of Notes, but discussion of this will be facilitated when Anglo-Soviet negotiations have reached a more advanced stage.

8. As regards the other possible eventualities, it seems from your telegram under reference that Turkey is prepared to co-operate in assisting Roumania, if action by both the United Kingdom and Turkey becomes necessary under

⁴ This paragraph corresponds with that paragraph in the Turkish Note printed as the enclosure in No. 641 beginning: 'Par la teneur de l'alinéa 3 de la déclaration . . . '.

⁵ These paragraphs correspond to the three paragraphs in the enclosure in No. 641 beginning 'En moins qu'il ne s'agisse d'une action italienne . . . ' and ending ' . . . la résistance isolée de la Turquie contre l'Allemagne ou une tierce Puissance '.

the terms of the joint Declaration as a result of an attack on Roumania which brought about 'war in the Mediterranean area'. Such co-operation to be effective could not be confined to the Mediterranean area pure and simple but would have to include direct assistance to Roumania.

9. It equally appears that Turkey is reluctant to undertake an obligation to assist Roumania in a war in which Italy would be neutral and where therefore there would presumably be no war in the Mediterranean. The possibility of Italy remaining neutral has been much diminished by the conclusion of the German and Italian Treaty. Assuming, however, the neutrality of Italy and apart from the case of aggression by Russia, already excepted, Roumania might be the victim of attack either by Bulgaria or by or through Hungary. The case of attack by Bulgaria is already provided for in Turkey's commitments under the Balkan Pact. The only case which remains to be provided for is the possibility of attack by Hungary or by Germany through Hungary. Separate action by Hungary is most unlikely without the direct instigation and active participation of Germany, and in any case might well not involve Great Britain and France's guarantee, if in fact such an unsupported attack constituted no clear threat to Roumania's independence. But an attack by Germany, either with Hungary's co-operation or acquiescence or in the face of Hungarian opposition, involving the possible penetration of Germany to the Black Sea, would surely constitute such a serious threat to Turkish national security as to render it essential for Turkey in her own interests actively to assist in the defence of Roumania.

10. Although therefore we appreciate the Turkish Government's wish that they should only undertake a commitment to assist Roumania if a 'threat to Turkish national security' is in existence, we hope they will feel able to agree that a threat to Roumanian independence is for practical purposes the same as a threat to Turkish security and so to withdraw their proposal that a clause specifically providing for such a condition should be included in the interim understanding. From the Roumanian point of view, such a clause would be thought to weaken the efficacy of the British guarantee for the reasons given in paragraph 5 above; and we do not wish any doubts to arise regarding our assistance to Roumania, such as might weaken the Roumanian will to resist. From the Turkish point of view, it will be realised that the British guarantee to Roumania only applies in the event of a clear threat to the independence of that country, which the Roumanian Government think it necessary to resist, and for the reasons given above such a threat to Roumania's independent existence would in fact constitute a threat to Turkish national security. This should appeal to Turkey as a conclusive argument in favour of assuming an obligation to assist us in endeavouring to prevent German domination of Roumania. Turkish co-operation with us in this matter is of great practical importance, and we believe that it is at least as much in the interests of Turkey as of the United Kingdom to undertake as regards Roumania the same commitments (subject of course to the point referred to in paragraph 7 above) as we are prepared to undertake.

11. You will observe that my draft for the interim understanding deals

only with the question of Turkish assistance to Greece and Roumania, and that it contains no general formula covering the whole Balkan area. There are therefore no grounds for the fears expressed by the Minister for Foreign Affairs (see paragraph 11 of your telegram No. 253⁶) in regard to the position of Yugoslavia and Bulgaria.

12. I trust that, making such use of the considerations advanced above as you think desirable, you will be able to persuade the Turkish Government that it is in their own ultimate interest to agree to accept the further commitment as regards Roumania which I have provided for in paragraph 2 of the draft interim understanding.⁷

⁶ This paragraph corresponds to that paragraph of the enclosure in No. 641 beginning: 'D'autre part si l'accord définitif entre nos deux pays . . . '.

⁷ Sir E. Phipps was instructed on June 2 to inform the French Government of the contents of this telegram and No. 684. Sir E. Phipps carried out his instructions in a Note which he communicated to the French Government on June 3.

No. 688

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora)

No. 217 Telegraphic [R 4511/661/67]

FOREIGN OFFICE, June 1, 1939, 10.30 p.m.

Your telegram No. 253,¹ paragraph 2 (b).

I note that in defining juridical position of His Majesty's Government as regards Greece Minister for Foreign Affairs mentions fact that His Majesty's Government's obligation is conditional on Greek resistance. He does not, however, mention second condition that it also depends on action being taken which clearly threatens the independence of Greece.

¹ Not printed. See No. 641, note 1. The paragraph in question corresponds to that paragraph of the enclosure in No. 641 beginning: 'Quant à la Grande Bretagne . . . '.

No. 689

Sir W. Seeds (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 2)

Unnumbered Telegraphic [C 7886/3356/18]

MOSCOW, June 1, 1939¹

Please substitute following extracts from M. Molotov's speech for those contained in my telegram No. 108.² 'Certain changes in direction of resistance to aggression are to be remarked in policy of non-aggressive States of Europe. It remains to be seen to what extent these changes are serious. At present one cannot even say whether these Powers have a real desire to refrain from the policy of non-intervention and from policy of non-resistance to further development of aggression. Will it not happen that present tendency of these Powers to limit aggression to certain areas will fail to serve as

¹ The times of despatch and receipt of this telegram are not recorded.

² Not printed. See No. 681, note 1.

bar to development of aggression in other areas? Questions of this nature are raised in certain organs of bourgeois press abroad. Therefore we must be vigilant. We stand for cause of peace and for prevention of any sort of development of aggression. But we must remember statement made by Stalin "care should be maintained not to allow our country to be drawn into conflicts by provocators [*sic*] of war who are accustomed to pull chestnuts out of the fire with other people's hands". It is only by observing this that we shall be able to defend to the end interests of our country and interests of universal peace.

'There seem, however, to be various signs that democratic States of Europe are coming to realise more and more breakdown of policy of non-intervention and necessity of more serious searches for ways and means to create united front of peace-loving states against aggression. In such country as England loud demands have come to be heard as to necessity of an abrupt change in foreign policy. We, of course, understand difference between a verbal declaration and actual policy. But it is appropriate to note that these demands have not been idle ones. Here are certain facts. No pact of mutual assistance existed between England and Poland. Now the decision to create such a pact has been taken. The significance of this agreement is heightened by Germany's denunciation of pact of non-aggression with Poland. It would be idle to deny that pact of mutual assistance between England and Poland brings about change in European situation. Let us go further. There was no pact of mutual assistance between England and Turkey but recently a certain agreement of mutual assistance between England and Turkey has already come into being. This fact also makes for change in international situation.

'In connexion with these new facts endeavour of non-aggressive European powers to attract U.S.S.R. into collaboration in cause of resistance to aggression has to be acknowledged as one of chief features of recent times. Naturally this endeavour merits attention. On this basis Soviet Government accepted proposal of England and France to enter into negotiations with object of strengthening political relations between U.S.S.R., England and France and of forming a peace front against further development of aggression.

'How do we determine our problems in present day international situation? We consider that they follow line of interests of other non-aggressive states. They consist in stopping further development of aggression and creating for this purpose reliable and effective defensive front of non-aggressive powers.

'In connexion with proposals made to us by English and French Governments Soviet Government entered into negotiations with those two Governments having in view necessary measures for fighting aggression. This was in middle of April last. Negotiations which then began have not yet been terminated. However it was possible then to see that if there were a desire to create an effective front of peace-loving powers against advance of aggression following conditions would be necessary minimum.

'Conclusion between England, France and U.S.S.R. of an effective pact of mutual assistance against aggression having a purely defensive character;

a guarantee on part of England, France and U.S.S.R. to States of Central and Eastern Europe, including without exception all European States bordering on U.S.S.R., from an attack by aggressors; the conclusion of concrete agreement between England, France and U.S.S.R. as to forms and extent of immediate and effective assistance to be rendered to each other and to guaranteed States in case of an attack by aggressors.

‘This is our view which we impose on nobody but for which we stand. We do not demand acceptance of our point of view and do not ask this from anybody. We consider, however, that this point of view really corresponds to security of peaceful States. This would be an agreement of purely defensive character operative against an attack on part of aggressor and radically different from military and offensive union which was recently concluded between Germany and Italy.

‘It is clear that principle of reciprocity and equal obligations must form basis of such an agreement.

‘It must be noted that a favourable attitude towards this elementary principle was not found in certain of Anglo-French proposals. Having guaranteed themselves from direct attack by aggressors by pacts of mutual assistance between themselves and Poland and having made sure of help of U.S.S.R. in case of an attack by aggressors on Poland and Roumania, English and French left open question whether U.S.S.R. in its turn might reckon on assistance on their part in case of direct attack on it by aggressors. Another question was left open as well, namely, whether they could participate in guarantee to small neighbouring States which cover north-western border of U.S.S.R. should those States not be in position to defend their neutrality from aggression. There arose in this way position of inequality for U.S.S.R.

‘During last few days new Anglo-French offers have been received. In these offers principle is already admitted of mutual assistance between England, France and U.S.S.R. on basis of reciprocity in case of direct attack by aggressors. This is of course a step forward. One has to note, however, that it is hedged round with such reservations including reservations connected with certain points of statutes of League of Nations that it may prove to be fictitious step forward. As to question of guarantee to Powers of Central and Eastern Europe proposals referred to show no progress at all if one looks upon question from point of view of reciprocity. They provide for assistance to U.S.S.R. in regard to the five Powers to whom English and French have already given promises of guarantees but they do not speak of their assistance to the three Powers on north-western borders of U.S.S.R. who may not be in a position to defend their neutrality in case of attack by aggressors.

‘The Soviet Union, however, cannot assume obligations in regard to five Powers indicated should it not receive guarantees in regard to three countries situated on its north-western frontier. This is the situation with regard to negotiations with England and France.

‘While conducting negotiations with England and France we see no

necessity for refusing commercial relations with such countries as Germany and Italy. As far back as beginning of last year German Government began negotiations for trade agreement and new credits. At that time Germany offered to grant us new credit of 200 million marks. Inasmuch as we did not come to terms about this new economic agreement negotiations came to an end. At end of 1938 German Government again raised question of economic negotiations and of granting of credit of 200 million marks. German offer was accompanied by readiness to make certain concessions. At beginning of 1939 People's Commissariat for Foreign Trade was informed that special German representative, Herr Schnurre, was leaving for Moscow in connexion with these negotiations. Thereafter negotiations were confided to German Ambassador in Moscow, Herr von [der] Schulenburg, in place of Herr Schnurre and they were interrupted in view of differences of opinion. Now there are certain indications that negotiations may be resumed.'

No. 690

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 2)

No. 326 Saving: Telegraphic [R 4525/661/67]

PARIS, June 1, 1939

I asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs this morning what progress was being made with the Franco-Turkish negotiations.

M. Bonnet replied that they were practically concluded, and that he hoped the Agreement would be signed on June 5.¹

¹ The Franco-Turkish Agreement was signed on June 23.

No. 691

Minute by Sir O. Sargent

[C 8020/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, June 1, 1939

The Roumanian Minister came to see me this afternoon to raise two questions:

(1) The Roumanian Government had from the very beginning asked that in any Anglo-Russian agreement Roumania should not be mentioned by name. I said that we had borne this in mind and that the draft agreement which we had communicated to the Russian Government made no mention of Roumania or of any of the other limitrophe States. M. Tilea, however, judging from M. Molotov's speech yesterday,¹ feared that we would now be asked to specify the countries who were to be guaranteed by Great Britain and Russia. He wanted, therefore, to renew the Roumanian Government's request that Roumania should not be mentioned by name. I said I would take note of this.

¹ See No. 689.

(2) M. Tilea told me—which I did not know before—that M. Titulesco is arriving today in London. Although M. Tilea had no instructions from his Government, he expressed the hope that we would, if possible, prevent M. Titulesco from giving public utterance to his well-known views about Russia.² He did not know whether M. Titulesco was going to give any lectures or make any public speeches, but presumably he would be seeing journalists, and he hoped that any interviews he gave to them would not be published if they dealt with the Roumanian-Russian problem. It did not matter what M. Titulesco said, for example, about the Balkan Entente, about which he wrote a letter to 'The Times' the other day;³ but while the Anglo-Russian treaty was under negotiation it might be very embarrassing if M. Titulesco expressed views about Russia's role in Europe which, I gathered, would presumably not be those of the Roumanian Government. I expressed doubt as to whether we had any means of silencing M. Titulesco, to which M. Tilea replied that when he had been over here in 1937, the News Department had found means to prevent the interviews he gave to the British press from being published. I expressed surprise at this, but said I would make enquiries as to what was being done with regard to M. Titulesco's visit.

Lastly, I asked M. Tilea whether he would be seeing M. Titulesco himself. He said he did not know, but of course if he did he would strongly advise him not to give any public expression to his views about Russia.

O. G. SARGENT

² M. Titulesco had advocated an understanding between Roumania and the Soviet Union.

³ This letter appeared in 'The Times' of May 25.

No. 692

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw)

No. 351 [C 7917/1110/55]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *June 1, 1939*

Sir,

The Polish Ambassador called to see me this evening on instructions from his Government. His Excellency said that he regretted very much that it was his duty to report to me that the Polish Government had been greatly disappointed by the reply of His Majesty's Government to their request for financial assistance.¹ They felt that in the event of war it would quite possibly, or indeed probably, be upon Poland that the main brunt of German attack would fall, and, from the point of view of the peace combination that we were seeking to erect, it seemed of the highest importance to make the great Polish asset of man-power effective. At present this asset could not be fully employed because it could not be fully armed. If, however, this difficulty could be overcome, the asset of Polish man-power could be expanded 50 per cent., and the Polish Government could not but feel that in this way Great Britain

¹ See No. 562.

would assure herself of getting good value and perhaps better value than in any other way for her money.

2. At the present time the Polish war industries were working to their maximum capacity on a three-shift basis and great progress was being made. But the Finance Minister had told him that he doubted whether it would be within his power to supply the necessary funds for the military requirements much beyond the end of the present month. All available money was now being devoted to army necessities in the way of purchasing raw materials from abroad, keeping war industries going, and maintaining mobilisation. For this purpose expenditure was being curtailed from other purposes—he specifically mentioned education. After June it would, the Finance Minister feared, be necessary to reduce this contribution for the army, and such reduction would inevitably be noticed in Germany, and, apart from its other effects, would be adjudged poor testimony for the efficiency of the common front.

3. The Ambassador further told me that the parallel conversations that the Polish Government had been conducting in Paris had been, up to a point, proceeding well and the Polish Government had expected to make arrangements for the implementing of some old and the securing of some new credits. Recently, however, the French conversations had gone less well and the Polish Government was inclined to feel that they had been slowed down through a desire of the French Government not to be greatly in front of His Majesty's Government in this matter. The reply that we had sent to the Polish Government did not, the Ambassador feared, meet the pressing necessities of the Polish Government, and he had been accordingly specially instructed to see me and, if I thought it possible or desirable, the Chancellor and the Prime Minister. The Polish Government attached the greatest possible importance to the question and had charged him to leave nothing undone to convince His Majesty's Government of the urgency with which they regarded it. In present circumstances, his Government was doubtful about the desirability of sending a delegation to London for financial discussion, inasmuch as our reply to their request had seemed in their view unduly to restrict the ground that such discussions might cover. The points which the reply of His Majesty's Government had left open for discussion were, of course, important, but in the thought of the Polish Government were not the most important of those that they would wish to see examined together.

4. The Ambassador dwelt at some length upon the degree to which he appreciated and had pressed in Warsaw the real difficulties felt by the Chancellor of the Exchequer. But the Polish financial authorities had thought that if it was possible for a Polish delegation to discuss the whole ground with His Majesty's Government without restrictions, it would not be impossible to find ways and means by which these difficulties might be diminished. They felt that any financial help that might be forthcoming from Great Britain, in addition to its own intrinsic value, might further have the effect of liberating additional internal resources within Poland.

5. I told the Ambassador that I should, of course, lose no time in placing

the Prime Minister and the Chancellor, and indeed all my colleagues, in possession of what he had said. I said that I need not assure him of the sympathy of His Majesty's Government in the real difficulties of which he had spoken and that it was our desire to lend every help we could, but, as he had said, the difficulties with which the Chancellor of the Exchequer found himself confronted were no less real, and I could assure him that at the present time they were of such a nature as to cause the Chancellor and the Cabinet the gravest possible anxiety. While we all realised how directly the Polish embarrassments might react upon the common efficiency of our joint effort, we could, on the other hand, not overlook the fact that in the event of war one of the strongest weapons in the hand of Great Britain must be that of economic staying power, which accordingly it was essential not to impair.

6. I promised the Ambassador to represent, as strongly as I could, everything that he had said to the Prime Minister and the Chancellor and would communicate with him again as soon as I was in a position to do so. His Excellency thanked me and said that he greatly hoped that there would be no great delay as in this matter days were of importance.

7. In a short reference to the Staff conversations the Ambassador said that he understood that the Polish General Staff had dealt with our Mission on terms of complete confidence and had, in fact, as was in the circumstances inevitable, given to our Mission more confidential information than they had been able to receive in return.

8. His Excellency asked me whether we were taking any action to give shape to the definitive agreement between Great Britain and Poland on the main lines in regard to which we had reached a decision at the time of Colonel Beck's visit to London. I told him that we had suspended action on this for the time in the hope of bringing our negotiations with Russia to earlier conclusion than had, in fact, proved possible. Now, however, we were taking the matter up, and I hoped soon to be able to send some proposals on this subject to his Government. M. Bonnet had recently pressed me in the same sense at Geneva, and I had no doubt that the Polish Government would agree as to the desirability of both France and ourselves getting our respective undertakings with Poland into a definite and parallel shape as early as possible.

9. Before he left, I asked His Excellency if he had any news about Danzig that might not be in my possession, but I do not think he had anything to say about this that was new. He did, however, tell me that some three weeks ago there was evidence of what he called whispering propaganda in Danzig to the effect that the middle of June would be a period of great anxiety, but he was not disposed to attach any particular importance to this as it was part of the familiar Nazi technique.

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

Sir A. Ryan (Durazzo) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 6)

No. 82 [R 4613/1335/90]

DURAZZO, June 1, 1939

My Lord,

I have considered with great care the copy, which Your Lordship was good enough to send me in your printed despatch No. 91 of May 23, of your despatch No. 231¹ of May 20 recording a conversation with the Greek Minister in London regarding the apprehensions aroused in the mind of his Government by the Italian military activities in Albania. While I do not myself, as at present advised, see reason to expect an early Italian attack on Greece, especially in view of the cogent argument adduced in paragraph 2 of your despatch to Sir S. Waterlow, I feel bound to submit certain considerations which make me doubt whether the fears of the Greek Government can be dismissed as entirely groundless.

2. I agree that it must be a matter of primary interest to the Italians to maintain their position in Albania itself. If, however, that were the only object of their military activities during the last six weeks or so, I should expect to see a very different distribution of their forces. The mountain districts most likely to cause them eventual trouble are those in the north and north-east of the country, but all the evidence is that they are content to hold those districts very lightly and have directed their forces mainly towards the south and south-east. Moreover their main concentrations are along the roads leading to the Greek frontier via Elbasan-Korce and via Tepelini. There is no indication that either north or south they have found it necessary to engage in any important operations in the mountains.

3. Another fact which impresses all local observers is that, while the number of Italian troops has not been greatly added to for some little time past, the amount of material and supplies has been increased in apparent disproportion to the number of troops. In the absence of expert advice, I cannot myself estimate the disproportion, but the quantities of artillery, tanks, petroleum fuel etc. which are being imported, are in the aggregate very considerable. If, having collected this material and distributed it suitably in the area from Tirana, where there are now about 150 tanks as well as other forces, to the two sectors of the Greek frontier, Italy wished to deliver a sudden attack on Greece, it would be an easy matter to pour further troops at short notice across the Adriatic to Durazzo, Valona and Santi Quaranta. A not inconsiderable number might even be conveyed by air to places not far from the frontier, where, as you know, the Italians have been busy constructing aerodromes and landing-grounds.

4. My Greek colleague, with whom I reviewed the situation in general terms on May 30, shares my views both as regards the improbability of an *immediate* attack and as regards the ease with which the Italians could

¹ No. 572. Foreign Office despatch No. 91 to Durazzo was a formal covering despatch.

strengthen themselves sufficiently to deliver one at short notice, should they at any moment decide to take the bull by the horns. He is particularly impressed by the proportion of troops etc. already in Albania, more suitable, according to his information, for attack than for defence, like motorized Bersaglieri and artillery and tank units. I attach the greater importance to the opinions of M. Skeferis, as he is at all times a man of the most studiously moderate views.

5. As I have intimated above I appreciate the force of the argument set forth in paragraph 2 of your despatch No. 231 to Athens. It appears to me nevertheless, if I may say so with great deference and diffidence, to take insufficient account of the ever present possibility of a combined drive by Germany and Italy in the South-East and East of Europe and the connected possibility of their stirring up trouble in Macedonia as a preliminary step towards concerted action, to be taken even at the risk of a general war. As regards the main possibility I can of course form no opinion of any value. As regards the second, I cannot say that I see any immediate danger, especially as my Greek colleague seems to be confident of the political situation in the Greek parts of Macedonia, just as he tells me that he has no evidence of any important Italian activity in the region of Chamuria immediately south of Albania. I merely draw attention to factors, which, if not at present dangerous, cannot be disregarded.

6. I observe that in the enclosure in Rome despatch to the Foreign Office No. 451² of the 19th May, the Assistant Military Attaché puts the total Italian forces in Albania on May 16 at a probable figure of about 50,000 men. While I hesitate to question any expert estimate, I would observe that this figure falls a good deal short of the estimates of local observers up to the same date, notably the Yugoslav Military Attaché and the Greek Minister, both of whom have fairly good sources of information and both of whom are conservative. The figure generally accepted here lies between 65,000 and 70,000 or even 75,000, which M. Skeferis gave me on May 30 as his absolute maximum. It would be outside the scope of the present despatch to discuss the figures in detail, but I may say that it would be very useful if Major Barter could visit Durazzo for two or three days in the near future to review the subject on the spot in consultation with the two persons I have named and with the assistance of Mr. Gamble, who has given great attention to the subject.

I am sending copies of this despatch to His Majesty's Representatives at Rome and Athens.

I have, &c.,

ANDREW RYAN

² Not printed.

No. 694

Sir P. Loraine (Rome) to Viscount Halifax
(Received June 2, 1.50 p.m.)

No. 489 Telegraphic: by telephone [R 4551/1/22]

ROME, June 2, 1939

Can I shortly expect to receive result of your examination of my telegrams No. 483¹ and No. 484?² The Duce is particularly sore about the Anglo-Turkish Declaration and will, I fear, be sorer still unless he receives pretty soon your reaction to his question which I undertook to put to you.³

¹ No. 651.

² No. 652.

³ Sir P. Loraine was informed later on June 2 that a draft reply was awaiting the final approval of the Prime Minister and would be sent as soon as possible.

No. 695

Viscount Halifax to Sir R. Hoare (Bucharest)

No. 256 Telegraphic [R 4404/661/67]

FOREIGN OFFICE, June 2, 1939, 5.45 p.m.

Your telegram No. 225.¹

My telegram No. 252² was drafted before I received the fuller account in Angora telegram No. 250³ of the Roumanian *démarche* at Angora. In the light of the latter you need not act on my telegram No. 252.

Repeated to Angora and Belgrade.

¹ No. 655.

² No. 647.

³ No. 633.

No. 696

Mr. Shepherd (Danzig) to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)

No. 24 Saving: Telegraphic¹ [C 7969/54/18]

DANZIG, June 2, 1939, 7.5 p.m.

Addressed to Berlin telegram 24 Saving, repeated to Warsaw 15.

High Commissioner informs me that on June 1 he had interview in Berlin with Weizsäcker and von Ribbentrop also with Lipski.

2. High Commissioner states that for about one hour he discussed many subjects with von Ribbentrop who declared that provided Polish press moderated its tone and there were no further incidents, Germany would do its utmost to reduce the tension over Danzig. High Commissioner gained the impression that Germans have lost some of their self-assurance and he will discuss this with Mr. Makins on June 11.²

¹ This telegram was addressed to Berlin as telegram No. 24 Saving and was repeated as No. 50 to the Foreign Office, where it was received on June 3 at 9.30 a.m.

² For Mr. Makins' conversation with M. Burckhardt on June 11 see Volume VI of this Series.

Sir W. Seeds (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 3, 9.30 a.m.)
No. 114 Telegraphic [C 7970/3356/18]

MOSCOW, June 2, 1939, 10.25 p.m.

Your telegram No. 119.¹

M. Molotov handed to the French Ambassador and myself this afternoon what he described as the text² of the Anglo-French proposed agreement modified to meet the views of the Soviet Government as follows:

'The Governments of Great Britain, France and U.S.S.R. with the object of making more effective the principles of mutual assistance against aggression adopted by the League of Nations, have come to the following agreement:

'1. France, England and U.S.S.R. undertake to render to each other immediately all effective assistance should one of these States become involved in hostilities with a European Power as a result either of (1) aggression by that Power against any one of these three States, (2) aggression by that Power against Belgium, Greece, Turkey, Roumania, Poland, Latvia, Estonia and Finland, whom England, France and U.S.S.R. have agreed to defend against aggression, (3) assistance rendered by one of these three States to another European State which has requested such assistance in order to resist violation of its neutrality.

'2. The three States will come to an agreement within the shortest possible time as to methods, forms and extent of assistance which is to be rendered by them in conformity with paragraph 1.

'3. In the event of circumstances arising which, in the opinion of one of the contracting parties, create a threat of aggression by a European Power, the three States will immediately consult together to examine the situation and in case of necessity to establish in common moment for putting into immediate effect mechanism of mutual assistance and manner of its application independently of any procedure applied by the League of Nations to examination of questions.

'4. The three States will communicate to each other the texts of all their engagements assumed in the spirit of the obligations provided for under paragraph 1 in respect of European States. If one of these States contemplates in the future possibility of assuming new obligations of a similar character it will first consult the other two States and communicate to them the contents (text) of agreement.

'5. In the event of commencement of joint operations against aggression in accordance with paragraph 1 the three States undertake only to conclude an armistice or peace by joint agreement.

¹ No. 624.

² On June 5 the Foreign Office telegraphed to Sir W. Seeds to inquire whether the text was an English translation from a Russian text. Sir W. Seeds replied on June 6 that the text was a translation and that the original text had been communicated in Russian and French.

'6. The present agreement enters into force simultaneously with agreement which is to be concluded in virtue of paragraph 2.

'7. The present agreement will continue in force for a period of five years from this date. Not less than six months before expiry of this period the three States will consider whether they wish to renew it with or without modification'.

2. M. Molotov pointed out that apart from consolidation of our Articles 1 and 2 into one article with that additional precision which Soviet Government desired in regard to countries affected, main changes were (a) an attempt to deal with allusion to League of Nations in accordance with assurances Your Lordship had instructed me to give, (b) omission of our Article 5 which the Soviet Government considered unnecessary, and (c) insertion of provision (Article 5) as regards conclusion of armistice or peace. He did not specifically mention new Article 6 which is of considerable importance.

3. I made no comment and merely said that His Majesty's Government would give this text that friendly consideration which they were always ready to accord to the views of the Soviet Government.

4. French Ambassador after stressing the fact that he had no instructions made purely personal suggestion that certain delicate points (such as exclusion of League procedure and insertion of names of countries who were reluctant to be openly associated with this agreement) might be better dealt with in a separate memorandum or document which would be as valid as agreement but which presumably would not be published. M. Molotov rather indicated that this would not meet desired precision in regard to names of countries but matter was not gone into at any length.

No. 698

Sir P. Loraine (Rome) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 5)

No. 184 Saving: Telegraphic [R 4604/1/22]

ROME, June 2, 1939

Yesterday evening, in order to avoid any possible impression that Signor Mussolini's communication to me of May 27¹ was not being dealt with or that I was sulking in my tent, I went to see Count Ciano; we talked pretty frankly but although there was the same cleavage in our views, our exchanges were perfectly good-tempered.

2. I tried to show him the feeling of uneasiness and alarm that the acts of the Axis Powers had not unnaturally aroused in recent times among a number of States, lest their independence and freedom of action should be threatened. Europe was falling more definitely into two camps: it was regrettable in my opinion but the fact could hardly be denied. Yet on both sides the responsible statesmen, especially of late, had laid emphasis on the desire of their

¹ See No. 652.

countries for peace and for a solution of pending difficulties without recourse to the sword. I had naturally reflected deeply on what Signor Mussolini had said to me, and I wished to put it to Count Ciano whether it was not bound to make matters worse if Italy allowed the Anglo-Italian Agreement to lapse. Perhaps the most important object of that Agreement was to stabilize the situation in the Mediterranean. Its contribution to this end had been a valuable one. Was now the moment to cast away that stabilising factor?

3. Count Ciano replied that he naturally had a tender and indeed a parental feeling for the Anglo-Italian Agreement and he could hardly be indifferent to its disappearance. At the same time, as I must have seen on Saturday,² Signor Mussolini was hurt, hurt in his feelings, by the Anglo-Turkish 'alliance': it was in fact an alliance, and it could only be aimed at Italy. Even if His Majesty's Government had not infringed the letter of the Anglo-Italian Agreement, they had infringed its spirit. Another main object of that agreement had been to re-establish confidence between our two countries. The Anglo-Turkish 'alliance' showed clearly a lack of confidence for Italy had never threatened either the United Kingdom or Turkey.

4. I asked whether we might not have equally claimed that our confidence had been shaken earlier by Italian action in Albania: it was true that we were waiting to know the future form of the Albanian State, but I suggested that our attitude towards an action which we could hardly be expected to approve had been very *chic* to Italy. Did he admit that? For we had not formulated any complaint about the alteration of the Mediterranean *status quo* and had decided to allow the Anglo-Italian Agreement to run.

5. Count Ciano said he did admit that we had been *chic*. But what I said showed all the same that the confidence which our agreement had been meant to re-establish had been shaken: and he agreed with Signor Mussolini that in the circumstances a query must be put to the future value of the agreement.

6. He also agreed with Signor Mussolini's view that the policy now being pursued by the Prime Minister, a novel departure in their opinion, was more likely to conduce to war than to peace. The system of guarantees and alliances that His Majesty's Government were building up was in fact an encirclement of the Axis Powers. Why did His Majesty's Government want to serve out these guarantees to Poland, Roumania and Greece? If these countries had asked for them, that would have been comprehensible.

7. As regards the 'alliances' and encirclement, I took the same line as I had with Signor Mussolini, adding that their character was purely defensive and that the simple fact was that if there were no aggression there would be no war.

8. As regards the Anglo-Turkish Declaration, it must surely be obvious that neither the United Kingdom nor Turkey nor both dreamed of attacking Italy.

9. As regards the guarantees I suggested that his point about their being unsought, in itself a debatable one, was more technical than real. The real

² May 27.

thing was that the guarantees were neither unwanted nor unwelcome. And could one be astonished, when stress was laid on the offensive and defensive strength of the *bloc* of 150 million men represented by the Axis powers?

10. As to the last point Count Ciano said 'and we shall soon be even more numerous'. As regards the main question he maintained his point of view.

11. But Count Ciano did say that he could tell me that Italy did not want war, nor did Germany. Both countries needed peace. *Only* Mr. Chamberlain's new policy, etc., as before, and the Duce was and had remained upset.

12. We did digress occasionally into cognate but relatively subsidiary subjects. It was all quite friendly in tone, and I had prefaced my remarks by saying that in this critical stage of European affairs, which necessarily affected Anglo-Italian relations, I obviously could not fully understand the Italian point of view after a mere month's residence and I therefore wished to speak frankly so as to get to know his real thought, and I hoped he would be willing to listen attentively when I told him what was in my own mind.

No. 699

Sir P. Loraine (Rome) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 5)

No. 185 Saving: Telegraphic [R 4605/1/22]

ROME, June 2, 1939

My immediately preceding Saving telegram.¹

My American colleague came to see me this morning and I gave him the outline of my talk yesterday evening with Count Ciano. He concurs entirely in the view which I expressed to you after my interview with Signor Mussolini that Italy as a whole would view the denunciation of the Anglo-Italian agreement with consternation.²

We must nevertheless not forget that Signor Mussolini's hold over this country is as strong as ever.

¹ No. 698.

² See No. 653.

No. 700

Mr. Rendel (Sofia) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 5)

No. 42 Saving: Telegraphic [R 4578/661/67]

SOFIA, June 2, 1939

President of the Council told me on June 1 that in his view situation in South-Eastern Europe now depended primarily on results of visit of Prince Regent of Yugoslavia to Berlin.

2. Prince Paul had, he believed, succeeded in avoiding any commitment during his recent visit to Rome. But M. Kiosseivanoff did not feel entirely confident that His Royal Highness would be equally successful in avoiding some commitment at Berlin, though he hoped his doubts were unjustified. He felt that the prospect of an early Anglo-Soviet understanding ought to have a good effect both in stiffening Prince Paul's powers of resistance, and

in making the Germans more cautious. On the other hand he seems to have told my French colleague that he feared that the result of an Anglo-Soviet understanding would be increased pressure by Germany on Yugoslavia.

3. If Prince Paul were to commit himself in any way to Germany, the situation of the other Balkan states would become very serious. If the Axis Powers could make sure of Yugoslavia, Germany's next move would, he felt sure, be towards Roumania, and Bulgaria would then be next on the list and helpless to resist.

4. M. Kiosseivanoff, while welcoming prospect of Anglo-Soviet understanding as likely to give all South-Eastern European States confidence and increased power of resistance, was still very nervous about public opinion in this country. He used usual arguments. Unless he could show the Bulgarian people that they had some hope of justice from the democratic Powers, he would be unable to hold them, and a swing of public opinion towards the Axis would sooner or later be inevitable. His one desire was to keep Bulgaria out of any conflict, but the view was gaining ground that in a new European war it would not be possible for any country to remain neutral. This danger seemed increasingly serious and was causing him great anxiety.

Repeated to Angora, Athens, Belgrade and Bucharest.

No. 701

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 6)

No. 155 [C 8054/842/55]

WARSAW, June 2, 1939

My Lord,

I have the honour to transmit herewith a copy of an interesting minute by the Military Attaché to this Embassy, recording a conversation with the French Military Attaché regarding the recent Franco-Polish Staff conversations and the general problem of military and financial assistance to Poland.

2. I am sending a copy of this despatch to His Majesty's Ambassador at Paris.

I have, &c.,

H. W. KENNARD

ENCLOSURE IN NO. 701

Conversation with French Military Attaché

(M 291/P.)

WARSAW, May 31, 1939

1. General Musse, the French Military Attaché, came to see me yesterday. He has recently returned from France, where he took part in the Franco-Polish Staff conversations which were attended by General Kasprzycki.

2. General Musse told me that the Franco-Polish conversations had led to

recommendations that France should furnish Poland with a loan whose two-fold object would be to provide credit for the purchase of material from France, but—what is particularly significant—also credit for expenditure not necessarily solely devoted to purchases in France. General Musse stressed the economy of providing Poland with maximum financial and material aid at the earliest moment—it was so much cheaper than waiting until war broke out: aid towards reinforcing a fighting machine whose great value, present and still more potential, appeared to be insufficiently understood at home. He underlined the moral and political effect on a Germany faced by Polish Armed Forces known to be fully provided with modern equipment.

3. General Musse believed that little advantage could be gained by Germany launching her main attack in the western front. The Maginot Line was virtually impregnable, while Belgium would defend herself. A success against Holland would lead to the establishment of bases of value against Great Britain and France, but offered little immediate prospect of effecting a decision. On the other hand, he doubted Germany's ability to hold her western front and at the same time stage a simultaneous attack via Hungary on Roumania, and against Poland. He considered, in fact, that the main weight of German attack in the opening stages of a major war was likely to fall on Pomorze and Polish Silesia. It was thus a question of urgency to do what one could to support one's ally before the event, by contributing what in effect might prove a decisive deterrent at a cost which could only be described as infinitesimal when compared with the enforced expenditure of a great war.

4. General Musse referred to the difficulties of providing Poland with war material once war had broken out, and returned to an opinion he had expressed before, that it might be possible to provide Poland with a limited number of British and French squadrons which could form the nucleus of a ground organisation whereby the participation of Soviet aircraft and personnel might be facilitated. He fully appreciated the difficulties attendant on providing a sufficient ground organisation with its reserves of plant, mechanics and material of all kinds. But he pointed out the advantages attained through proximity to vital German targets, Soviet co-operation, and moral and very material support to Poland. Detailed preparation would be required, but how often had not operations considered impossible in times of peace proved to be not only possible but unavoidable in time of war? I pointed out certain of the objections to British squadrons operating from Poland, but General Musse felt that the moral and political factors involved were so important as to render the purely administrative difficulties of this question relatively less vital than they would otherwise be.

5. General Musse did not make it clear whether this question of French squadrons operating from Polish territory had been approved by the authorities in France, but it must undoubtedly have been discussed. He said that the Polish Delegation had, moreover, raised the question of French naval assistance in the Baltic. The French replied that these northern waters were the responsibility of Great Britain, but General Musse fully appreciated the

difficulties attendant on entering the Baltic, and admitted that in any event a base was essential for any operations apart from raids of limited scope. He stressed, however, the desirability of not allowing the Germans free movement in the Baltic, particularly as regards their communications with Sweden. Unfortunately the attitude of Finland was imponderable, and might probably indeed be unfavourable, in view of the pro-Soviet bias of the Allies.

E. R. SWORD,
Lieutenant-Colonel, Military Attaché

No. 702

Sir P. Loraine (Rome) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 5)

No. 504 [R 4601/7/22]

ROME, June 2, 1939

My Lord,

I have the honour, with reference to Sir Eric Phipps' telegram to Your Lordship No. 218¹ of the 1st June, to inform you that the French Embassy have volunteered the following details about the interview which the French Ambassador had with the Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs on May 30.

2. M. François-Poncet had only had a few specific points of minor importance to discuss, but he considered it desirable to maintain the rhythm of conversations with Count Ciano in order that there should be no long intervals such as, in the past, had had undesirable consequences. Count Ciano had observed that it was a pity that a *détente* could not be managed, and had complained of the policy of encirclement pursued by His Majesty's Government and the French Government. M. François-Poncet had replied that since March 18 nobody could be certain of anything, and had enquired why Italy had had to send so many men to Albania. Count Ciano's answer had been that Italy was obliged to take possible European repercussions into account and that at the same time she was determined to suppress any local risings with a firm hand.

3. Count Ciano had also said that, so far as he knew, Herr Hitler did not contemplate any forward move in connexion with Danzig in the near future, and had added that Signor Mussolini at present was 'en très mauvaise humeur'.

4. I am sending a copy of this despatch to His Majesty's Ambassador at Paris.

I have, &c.,
PERCY LORAINÉ

¹ No. 683.

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax
(Received June 3, 7.20 p.m.)
No. 272 Telegraphic [R 4566/661/67]

ANGORA, June 3, 1939, 1.28 p.m.

Your telegrams 215¹ and 216.²

1. I will communicate with Minister for Foreign Affairs immediately, giving him in form of a private letter such parts of your telegram No. 215 as appear necessary.

2. Meanwhile I should be grateful for guidance on two points in case Turkish Government allude to them. (a). Comparing draft with Declaration of May 12 it appears that whereas Declaration contains reference to identity of views between the two countries present text contains no such passage. Your view no doubt is that no such general clause is necessary in interim understanding either because enough has been said in clauses 1 and 2 of Declaration or because it would figure more appropriately in the final agreement (as seems to be suggested by first seven words of clause 3 of Declaration). I feel that Turkish Government may wonder why no such general clause is included (see my telegram No. 167³ paragraph 6) and may desire something of the kind from motives of *amour propre*. (b). Article 1 covers only an act of aggression leading to a war in the Mediterranean involving Greece whereas clause 3 of Declaration speaks of 'an act of aggression leading to war in the Mediterranean area' with no specific mention of Greece. It is possible that Turks may wonder why we are now limiting ourselves to a threat to Greece and are not covering possibility of a threat to Turkey. It seems clear from point 1 in my telegram No. 163⁴ that both Governments have in mind any war involving Italian participation and our present proposal may cause Turkish Government to ask themselves whether we are now trying to limit our undertaking to case of Greece only. Again *amour propre* may prompt desire to see mention of direct Anglo-Turkish mutual obligations on basis of last sentence of point 1 in my telegram No. 163.

3. I should be grateful for your views and guidance on these points in case they are raised. They do not seem to be entirely covered by argument in paragraph 11 of your telegram No. 215. I am of course putting that argument to Minister for Foreign Affairs and in addition I propose if necessary to take line on both points that interim understanding is only designed to cover most immediate dangers, that whole situation arose from recent threats to Greece and Roumania with their ulterior implications and that no doubt wider and more general points such as these are for the time being adequately covered by Declaration and could be dealt with more conveniently in final agreement.

4. I should propose to keep my French colleague informed by giving him copies of my communications to Minister for Foreign Affairs (with the latter's knowledge). These are always in the form either of private letters or com-

¹ No. 687.

² No. 684.

³ No. 291.

⁴ No. 286.

munications orales. I think this will be in accordance with procedure which you desire.

5. I should be grateful for early reply.

No. 704

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax

(Received June 4, 10.0 a.m.)

No. 273 Telegraphic [R 4567/661/67]

ANGORA, June 3, 1939, 7.2 p.m.

My telegram No. 268.¹

Minister for Foreign Affairs has now communicated to me privately copy of Roumanian reply to his communication of May 26. This is no doubt the 'further reply' referred to in first paragraph of Sir R. Hoare's telegram No. 227.² I am sending copy by bag.³

2. M. Gafencu notes with satisfaction that allusion to the Balkan security in Turko-British Declaration refers only to 'relations of assistance existing between Turkey and Great Britain' (*sic*). He interprets this to mean that in a case where in conformity with the Balkan Pact, Turkey gave her support to a Balkan State and was herself attacked, Great Britain would come to her assistance. 'Such an arrangement constitutes a strengthening of the Balkan security without there being any question of a new political combination into which the Balkan Entente would be drawn'.

3. Nevertheless certain susceptibilities must be taken into account. Yugoslavia attaches the first importance to maintaining complete independence *vis-à-vis* her neighbours, not in view of a possible war but rather in view of 'a certain state of peace' (*sic*). If peace continues under the present conditions Yugoslavia might become the victim of dangerous pressure without benefiting by any clause of Balkan Pact providing for assistance for the reason that such assistance is only provided for in the case of aggression. The allusion of the kind indicated (see paragraph 2) engages Yugoslavia's responsibility and facilitates external pressure without consolidating security.

4. In the conviction that Yugoslav anxieties imply no intention to leave the Balkan Entente and that if Yugoslav position in the Entente is rendered difficult the formation of a Bulgarian-Yugoslav-Hungarian *bloc* will be facilitated, M. Gafencu urges that in the final Turko-British and Turko-French Agreements, care will be taken to avoid anything which might establish a connexion between reciprocal Turko-British obligations and 'situation in Balkans'. He states that he is making similar representations in London. He argues that the existing obligations constitute an adequate security system.

5. Finally he asks that signature of definitive agreement be deferred until after his visit to Angora.

6. The Minister for Foreign Affairs, while agreeing to no pause in our negotiations, proposes to reply that nothing definite can be concluded before

¹ No. 686.

² No. 666.

³ Not printed.

M. Gafencu's visit. He has informed the Roumanian Ambassador that he understands you are 'slightly annoyed' at the attitude of the Roumanian Government.

Repeated to Belgrade, Bucharest and Athens.

No. 705

Viscount Halifax to Sir R. Campbell (Belgrade)

No. 26 Saving: Telegraphic [R 4507/661/67]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *June 3, 1939*

Your telegram No. 121.¹

Yugoslav Chargé d'Affaires called on May 30 in connexion with Anglo-Turkish Declaration but spoke entirely unofficially. He was evidently perturbed at possible reactions to any further mention of the Balkans, having apparently the impression that we were engaged on drafting an extremely comprehensive treaty with Turkey which might include such matters as question of recognition of Albania, etc. Among other things he seemed to think that such a treaty would have to cover the possibility of His Majesty's Government giving Italy a free hand in the Balkans. He said he feared that the only result of our negotiations with the Turks would be to draw down on the Balkan Entente and on Yugoslavia in particular the wrath of the Axis.

2. M. Milanovitch was assured that no consideration had yet been given here to the terms of the eventual treaty with Turkey. At the moment we were merely proceeding with consultations with the Turkish Government with a view to clearing up the position created by our guarantees to Greece and Roumania.

3. As regards paragraph 6 of the joint Declaration about which he had expressed anxiety M. Milanovitch was reminded that Turkey was a member of the Balkan Entente and therefore anything that threatened the security of the Balkans must threaten Turkey. In view of the fact that Turkey was a Mediterranean Power and that by the joint Declaration the United Kingdom and Turkey mutually guaranteed each other in the Mediterranean area it was only natural that both His Majesty's Government and the Turkish Government should be concerned and should make their concern public regarding the necessity for security in the Balkans.

Repeated to Sofia, Athens, Bucharest and Angora.

¹ No. 619.

No. 706

Letter from Sir O. Sargent to Sir P. Loraine (Rome)

[R 4308/399/22]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *June 3, 1939*

Dear Loraine,

In your telegram No. 476¹ of the 23rd May you suggested that we might make some public statement generally approving the speech which Mussolini

¹ No. 593.

made at Turin on the 14th May, or, alternatively, instruct you to speak to Mussolini on similar lines.

2. Your suggestion has been rather overtaken by events, and, as you will have seen, we did not think it wise to make such a statement before Parliament rose for Whitsun. There were two main reasons for this decision. First, we have already made our position abundantly clear to Mussolini in the message which Perth was instructed to make to him at his farewell interview (see our telegram No. 213² of the 20th April); you may also have noticed a passage in a speech which the Prime Minister made in the House of Commons on the 19th May,³ in which he said that we should not refuse to discuss means of satisfying the reasonable aspirations of other countries even if this involved some change in the existing state of things. We thus felt that we had already made our position as clear as words could make it and that to add new words to old would not be likely to improve the situation very much.

3. Secondly, Italy's claims at the moment are against France and not against us and we can therefore only hope to satisfy Italy's requirements, in so far as they are reasonable, and thus encourage her to pursue a peaceful policy by inducing the French to meet them. As you will have seen from the record of the Secretary of State's conversation with Daladier on May 20,⁴ we have already brought very strong pressure to bear on the French to persuade them at least to hold conversations with the Italians, but have met with a rebuff. The French attitude may or may not be reasonable, but it is a fact which we have to reckon with. If in these circumstances we had made a public statement on the lines you suggested, we should in some degree have been proclaiming our belief in the reasonableness of Mussolini's attitude and this would have put us in an embarrassing position as long as we could not carry the French with us; incidentally it would have put the French in an awkward position too. Moreover, the Italians would have been likely to pounce on such a statement, whether it was made publicly or privately to Mussolini, and say that if we agreed with his views it was up to us to compel the French to respond to his approach. There seemed to us to be already sufficient danger that the Italians might face us with this very embarrassing request and we were loth to do anything to increase the risk.

4. As it happens Mussolini did not raise this point in your conversation on the 27th May.⁵ We shall be letting you have a reply to his enquiry about the Anglo-Italian Agreement as soon as possible. Meanwhile we have been considering the desirability of a further approach to the French, and we recently asked Phipps whether a letter from the Prime Minister to Daladier would have any chance of shifting him from his negative attitude.⁶ We also suggested that the French might authorise us to sound the Italians as to whether they would be ready to agree to a substantial measure of demobilisation, particularly in Libya, as part of a settlement with France.⁷ Phipps in

² No. 235.

³ See Parl. Deb., 5th Ser., H. of C., vol. 347, cols. 1828-40.

⁴ See No. 570.

⁵ See Nos. 651-3.

⁶ See No. 638.

⁷ See No. 650.

reply, has expressed the view that the moment is not opportune for any such approach to the French,⁸ and I fear that he is right; but we may return to the charge later if the French themselves do not get a move on.

O. G. SARGENT

⁸ See No. 673.

No. 707

Mr. Shepherd (Danzig) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 4, 9.0 a.m.)

No. 52 Telegraphic [C 8008/54/18]

DANZIG, June 4, 1939, 1.45 a.m.

My telegram No. 44.¹

The President of the Danzig Senate has today addressed another Note to the Polish Commissioner-General complaining that he is still without replies to his Notes of May 16 and May 24 regarding Danzig-Polish frontier incidents and stating that he has instructed all Danzig officials to sever all official and social connexions with the three Polish officials concerned.

2. In a characteristically offensive article about the Kalthof tragedy the 'Danziger Vorposten' declares 'Official Poland stands behind a political murder because instigator of this crime must be sought in the ranks of Polish officials and diplomatists. Since these circles must know about the execution of such a murder plot hatched in obscurity, the political leader of Danzig can never allow the matter to end in a hopeless paper war. An end to senseless exchange of Notes in which polite opening and closing phrases are a strong contradiction of the murder theme as set forth in the Note!' And continues 'It is nothing else but a fresh provocation if Perkowski, Sziller and Swida² remain at large in Danzig'.

3. Article continues that the presence of uniformed Polish officials has been proved in practice to be a psychological burden to Danzig-Polish relations. These officials, it says, do not wear the ordinary uniform of Polish Customs administration but that of the Polish frontier guards, a body which is under the jurisdiction of the Polish War Office. Had Poland withdrawn its Customs Inspectors it would have shown that she was ready to take steps to remove the original cause of the quarrel.

4. Late afternoon edition of the 'Danziger Neueste Nachrichten' announces a further Note of President of the Senate to Polish Commissioner demanding instant reduction in the number of Polish Customs Inspectors in Danzig, which the President alleges now number well over one hundred, to the level agreed. Note also announces that the swearing in of Danzig Customs officials in accordance with Civil Service Law (see my despatch No. 185³ of November 18 last) to which Poland had, it is stated, made completely untenable objec-

¹ Not printed. This telegram reported two frontier incidents, at Kohling and Tczew.

² i.e. the three Polish officials concerned in the Kalthof incident. See No. 577. M. Perkowski was Deputy Polish Commissioner-General at Danzig.

³ Not printed. See No. 472, note 2.

tions, will now take place. The same newspaper refers to the Note mentioned in paragraph 1 above as 'Final Note'.

5. Danzig Senate has also protested sharply to Poland about the treatment in prison of a Danzig citizen named Legmanowski of Kartuzy. Repeated to Berlin and Warsaw.

No. 708

Viscount Halifax to Sir P. Loraine (Rome)

No. 259 Telegraphic [R 4399/1/22]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *June 4, 1939, 6.30 p.m.*

Your telegrams Nos. 483, 484, 485¹ and 487.²

You should seek an early interview with Signor Mussolini and deliver to him an oral message on the following lines and leave with him an *aide-mémoire* in the following terms:

'1. His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom are surprised at the question put to you by Signor Mussolini and have no hesitation in informing him in reply that they continue to attach the same value to the maintenance of the Anglo-Italian Agreement of 1938 as they did when they concluded it and subsequently when they made special effort to bring it into force. It is their desire in the future as in the past to base their policy towards Italy on the loyal interpretation of the spirit as well as of the letter of the Agreement, and so long as the Italian Government are of like mind His Majesty's Government see no reason why the Agreement should not be the keystone of Anglo-Italian relations for many years to come.

'2. The surprise of His Majesty's Government is all the greater in that they thought that they had given proof of the value which they attached to the agreement by their action at the time of Italy's occupation of Albania. It was then clearly open to them to maintain that the *status quo* in the Mediterranean, which was a basic object of the Agreement, had been altered, but they deliberately refrained from raising the question whether its validity had been affected by the Italian Government's action.

'3. I must dissent entirely from the view held by Signor Mussolini that His Majesty's Government have adopted a new line of policy. Their policy remains precisely as laid down in the preamble to the Anglo-Italian Agreement, where it is stated that the two Governments are animated by the desire to place the relations between the two countries on a solid and lasting basis and to contribute to the general cause of peace and security. As regards the latter, recent events in Albania and Czecho-Slovakia have, it is true, compelled His Majesty's Government to adapt to new circumstances the methods by which they have hitherto striven to carry out this policy and to pursue their aims by giving to certain countries undertakings in order to enable them to resist aggression. But the purpose of their policy remains the same. That purpose is to do their best to ensure that such changes as may be necessary

¹ Nos. 651-3.

² No. 660.

and right should be brought about not by force or the threat of force but by the peaceful process of negotiation.

'4. Signor Mussolini will recall that Lord Perth in his farewell interview on April 20³ assured His Excellency that His Majesty's Government were determined to do everything in their power to maintain peace and to seek a satisfactory settlement of difficulties without resort to war. They were glad to note from Signor Mussolini's speech at Turin on May 14⁴ that he shared this point of view. At that same interview Lord Perth gave a solemn assurance to Signor Mussolini that His Majesty's Government had not themselves any aggressive designs against any other Power nor would they permit themselves to be made parties to any act of aggression by others. And indeed it should be obvious from the terms of the guarantees which His Majesty's Government have given to Roumania and Greece as from the terms of the arrangements made with Poland and Turkey that the object of His Majesty's Government is only to prevent aggression and so to contribute to the general cause of peace and security which it was the intention of the Anglo-Italian Agreement to promote.

'5. So far, therefore, from questioning whether the Anglo-Italian Agreement possesses any further value (to use Signor Mussolini's words) the view of His Majesty's Government is that it should be regarded by both the Italian and British Governments as a basis from which, if both these Governments will co-operate to that end, could be developed a solid and lasting understanding between the two nations. His Majesty's Government for their part remain anxious to bring about such an understanding and they earnestly hope that their wish in this respect is shared by Signor Mussolini.'

³ See No. 242.

⁴ See No. 529, note 1, and No. 593.

No. 709

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax
(Received June 5, 9.45 a.m.)

No. 276 Telegraphic [R 4570/661/67]

ANGORA, June 4, 1939, 7.0 p.m.

My telegram No. 272.¹ Paragraph No. 3.

After making communication reported in my telegram No. 275² I told the Minister for Foreign Affairs that I proposed, with his consent, to follow procedure indicated. He agreed and said that on his side he must keep the Soviet Ambassador *au courant*. He proposed to do this as hitherto by giving the Ambassador copies of his communications to me but not of mine to him. I agreed.

¹ No. 703.

² Not printed. In this telegram of June 4 Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen reported that he had carried out the instructions in Nos. 687 and 684, and that the Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs was awaiting a communication regarding financial and economic questions.

No. 710

Mr. Orde (Riga) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 5, 12.30 p.m.)
No. 18 Telegraphic [C 8009/3356/18]

RIGA, June 5, 1939, 12.30 p.m.

Minister for Foreign Affairs sent for me this morning and expressed the earnest hope that in statement which he seemed to think would be made today in Parliament about negotiations with Soviet Government nothing would be said which would alter the position as regards Baltic States.¹

¹ In answer to a question on June 5 Mr. Chamberlain said that the Soviet reply to the latest British proposals was under consideration and he hoped to make a further statement very shortly. See Parl. Deb., 5th Ser., H. of C., vol. 348, cols. 11-12.

No. 711

Mr. Orde (Riga) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 5, 1.45 p.m.)
No. 20 Telegraphic [C 8015/3356/18]

RIGA, June 5, 1939, 2.19 p.m.

My telegram No. 18.¹

Minister for Foreign Affairs said that M. Molotov's speech² seemed to him to betray bad faith, in that stipulation for guarantee to Baltic States was an extraneous point having nothing to do with the point which Soviet Government might find to arise as regards full reciprocity in connexion with countries already guaranteed or as regards references to the League. He seemed to regard the latter as use of the League machinery (comparing existing Franco-Soviet Treaty) but did not demur when I questioned this interpretation pointing out that reference was only to 'principles' of certain articles of the Covenant.

He said that the formula communicated by His Majesty's Government³ seemed entirely satisfactory from the Latvian point of view though the Latvian Cabinet, which would meet tomorrow, had not yet considered it. In view of M. Molotov's speech it was possible that the Latvian Government might wish to make their views known to His Majesty's Government or the Soviet Government or both.

¹ No. 710.

² See No. 689.

³ See No. 635.

No. 712

Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 5, 8.0 p.m.)
No. 188 Telegraphic [C 8048/54/18]

WARSAW, June 5, 1939, 5.33 p.m.

Danzig telegram No. 52.¹

Colonel Beck's Chef de Cabinet told Counsellor today that he did not think that these two Notes from Danzig Senate necessarily conflicted with general

¹ No. 707.

impression that Berlin contemplated a lull as regards Danzig for the time being. They were in keeping with desire of local Nazi officials to score points, to make life unpleasant for Polish Customs officials, and to satisfy local opinion. But the Polish Government still thought the whole incident and its sequel were to be regarded as a local affair. The more detailed charges regarding number etc. of Customs officials would be duly answered. In point of fact there was no prescribed limit as to numbers though they had naturally been increased recently in order that Poles should have a better check on what was going into Danzig. As regards uniform there were at Danzig as on most frontiers (1) the ordinary Customs men who had to deal with such matters as duty payable on imports; (2) guards under Ministry of Finance who watched for smuggling. They were not a military organisation.

2. He added that the Polish Government understood that German warship intended to visit Danzig next Sunday.² It was a matter of interest and importance to know whether she would complete usual formalities before arrival or not.

Repeated to Berlin and Danzig.

² June 11.

No. 713

Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 7)
No. 232 Saving: Telegraphic [C 8102/54/18]

BERLIN, June 5, 1939

Following is my appreciation of present position in Germany as regards Danzig:

Herr Hitler appears to be waiting upon events in the hope that they may turn in his favour. He has already waited two months and if some concrete effort, which affords real prospect of success, is made to reach a solution, he may well wait some indefinite time longer. In doing so he may be influenced by the considerations, among others, that the present war spirit in England may diminish or that the financial and internal position of Poland may deteriorate in the interval.

2. On the other hand his recent visit to the Western Front has, as I have heard from various sources, greatly fortified his confidence in the invulnerability of Germany as regards attack from the West. If, therefore, the tide turns to his advantage sooner than expected, he may well seize what he may regard as the opportune moment without further delay, since he probably regards even a few months' pause as prejudicial to Germany from the point of view of her relative military preparedness *vis-à-vis* Western Powers and Poland. There are today well over a million regular troops under arms in Germany and as the result of the fluidity of the military organisation here and by means of various methods such as the present large-scale training of short-term reservists, etc., she would be likely, so far as man power is con-

cerned, to have a considerable start of her enemies in the early stages of a war. Nor is there any slackening in the intensive production of war material.

3. There is reason to believe that the majority of Hitler's military advisers, with possible exception of General Keitel, are opposed to a war in which at least neutrality of Russia is not assured. Any miscarriage of our negotiations with the U.S.S.R. might consequently be regarded as the favourable turn which Hitler is seeking.

4. Nevertheless I doubt if the fear of Russia is as potent a factor as might be imagined in the mind of Hitler himself. Though certainly the failure of our negotiations would strengthen his position and enable him, if necessary, more easily to overcome German military opposition which is based on two-front war theory, their success has already been largely discounted and the help which Russia would be likely to afford to her allies is, I fancy, not very highly rated. In my opinion the one factor which counts with Hitler is the might and tenacity of Britain itself. It is that alone which gives him pause.

5. Granted however that Russia definitely joins the anti-aggression *bloc*, that the Poles remain intransigent, or that his hopes of favourable developments in other respects are disappointed, Hitler will have to choose between either having to draw back with temporary loss of face at home and abroad; or having to take a big gamble in which his own fate as well as that of Party will be at stake. Though it is highly improbable that he regards the latter risk with any sort of equanimity, he may be driven into a position from which he cannot extricate himself and in which war may seem to him the less certain disaster.

6. If he decides upon a gamble, the most likely plan will be to hold the West with as few forces as possible and to concentrate every available man and aeroplane against Poland in the anticipation of a speedy victory in the East. In other words the same plan as would have been adopted last September in respect of Czecho-Slovakia. It is doubtful whether he would initiate a move of any kind in the West by air or otherwise but would remain there strictly on the defensive until attacked when of course he would retaliate. But, as with Poland, so with the Western Powers, his object would be to be able to represent to his people that it is the encircling democracies who are the aggressors in a preventive war. Having conquered Poland, he may well then at once propose peace to the West on terms sufficiently generous to Poland to place the onus on [*sic* ? of] continuing the war on the Western Powers.

7. If on the other hand he fails to see any prospect of achieving by negotiation something approximate to his minimum demands and yet feels himself obliged to wait or accept something considerably less rather than face a world war at this juncture, it may be taken for granted that this retreat will be neither genuine nor decisive but must be regarded as merely the awaiting of a more favourable opportunity to secure not only his minimum but also his maximum aims. That much he may be expected to be determined to make Poland pay for his temporary discomfiture. In any case he will never abandon his minimum aims for which he has the full backing of the whole nation.

Those can be summed up as follows: the restoration of Danzig to Germany and a passage across the Polish Corridor to link up East Prussia to the Reich, free of all Polish control. Nor is this a Hitler but an entire German minimum *irredenta*.

8. His maximum aims, in the event of war, would of course, as far as Poland is concerned, be much greater. In my recent conversations with a number of German officers I have been struck both by their readiness to recognise the breach of faith of March 15 with the criticism which that implies of their own Government and by the unanimity of their views as regards the necessity for the Corridor to revert to Germany. In this respect they were impervious to argument or menace. While it is true that the German people do not want another world war even anti-Nazis regard Hitler's offer to Poland as erring on side of moderation. It is equally true to say that he alone can impose it on his people; but for how long is a matter for hypothetical speculation.

9. Apart from the all important question as to whether a German-Polish compromise is possible, there is the serious consideration as to how long Hitler will be prepared to wait. This is unpredictable and may to some extent depend on the attitude and advice of the other member of the Axis, but my personal belief is that unless some unmistakable move has been made before August in the direction of finding a solution, he is likely to force a situation which will at least compel something to happen before (or possibly immediately after) the September Party Rally. He can scarcely face Nuremberg in the present state of uncertainty and the most obvious course for events to take would be for Danzig at some given date before or about then simply to declare itself reunited to Germany without involving immediate German intervention.

10. My French colleague holds view that it is necessary that there should be a definite show-down of this sort involving a direct crisis in which peace or war will hang in the balance. M. Coulondre would not apparently even seek any solution prior to such a crisis which alone, in his opinion, can convince Germany that we are really prepared to go to extreme limit. He then believes that Germany will give in rather than risk a world war and that methods of aggression will thus receive a final check.

11. The objection to this course, apart from the risk of it being then too late to save the peace, is that it leaves the initiative to Germany to produce the crisis how and when she wants it; that, when the moment comes, there is just as much chance of Germany being as ready as we are to go the limit; and that, in any case, even if she were to yield out of prudence, there would be nothing final about it. Moreover, is it not incumbent on us once more to try to prove to the totalitarian Powers that solutions are capable of being reached by negotiation before a crisis and not only under the immediate threat of war? In other words, if we cannot produce a reasonable solution before a crisis is again upon us, are we not vitiating our whole moral case and merely giving another proof of our inability to substitute for force negotiations in the spirit of Article XIX of Covenant.

12. It must be realised that there are, as last autumn, two currents of opinion in Germany, one in favour of going the limit and one in favour of taking no risks. The first may be comparatively small in number but is powerful in influence. There are also two lines of argument; one that England will not in the end be prepared to let loose a world war over Danzig and the other—a growing one in my opinion—which believes that England means to make war in any case as soon as she is ready for it and has arrayed sufficient forces hostile to Germany to ensure ultimate victory.

13. Hitler, who is the sole arbiter so far as Germany is concerned, is a visionary of genius, but he is also a realist. He is sufficiently the latter to be aware that when a war atmosphere is once created, the particular circumstances out of which war arises is relatively a matter of little importance. I much doubt therefore if he is greatly influenced himself by the wishful thought that England will not fight for Danzig. I am more inclined to fear lest, deeming war to be inevitable or believing that Poland, in view of the British guarantee, has no intention of being reasonable, he will choose his own occasion to precipitate the crisis. To my mind therein lies the bigger danger of the two. I doubt if he is yet absolutely convinced of the inevitability of war, though his speech at Kassel yesterday¹ foreshadows it, but his own relative military strength, the increasing difficulties of the economic situation and our protracted negotiations with the U.S.S.R. may drive him to that conclusion sooner rather than later.

14. If, for the above reasons it is correct to assume that we have not unlimited time at our disposal and taking full account of the necessity for allowing the temperature on both sides of the Vistula to drop, it would seem to be imprudent *whatever is the final outcome of our negotiations with Russia* to delay, once that outcome is reached, in attempting to bring Poles and Germans to reopen negotiations while the threat of war is still not actual.

15. I had some slight ground last week for belief that the German Government were wishful to find an opening for fresh negotiations with the Poles, but the ambiguous attitude of the U.S.S.R. may have induced them to change their minds again. If however the German press is a true barometer, it certainly indicates that Herr Hitler still desires or hopes for a peaceful solution. I have been careful and shall continue to refrain from any discussion with Germans as to what solution might be acceptable, so that I cannot say whether, if negotiations are reopened, Hitler will be ready to repeat his offer of April 28. There are nevertheless two possible lines on which a compromise might be reached, namely, (a) what Hitler meant by Danzig as a 'Free Port' and (b) Slovakia. The demilitarisation of the former and the renunciation by Germany of her special position as regards the latter might help to make other things possible for Poland.

Copy to Warsaw.

¹ At an ex-Service Men's Congress at Kassel on June 4 Herr Hitler had said that the responsibility for 1914 lay with the encirclement policy of the Western Powers; the same policy was being followed again, but this time Germany was prepared.

No. 714

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)

No. 1384 [C 8059/27/55]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *June 5, 1939*

Sir,

The French Ambassador asked to see me today. The principal purpose of his visit was to impress upon me the importance of making early progress with the draft terms of our treaty with Poland. The French Government were anxious that their own arrangement with Poland should be based on lines similar to our own and accordingly felt themselves held up by our not having hitherto been able to reach the point of giving precise form to the arrangement that we contemplated. Meanwhile, the Poles were putting great pressure upon the French Government.

2. I assured His Excellency that we were anxious to lose no time in this matter, but our difficulty had been and to some extent still was that the Polish draft had had to give way to the pressure of work upon the more urgent matter of Russia, and, indeed, the Polish draft depended to some extent upon what form the Russian agreement might ultimately take. I promised the Ambassador, however, to do everything that was possible to get the matter accelerated.

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

No. 715

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)

No. 1385 [C 8060/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *June 5, 1939*

Sir,

During the course of a conversation with the French Ambassador today His Excellency gave me some preliminary comments from the French Foreign Office in regard to the recent memorandum¹ of the Soviet Government. They did not attach great importance to the variation of the language used in relation to the Covenant of the League nor to the fact that the Soviet Government had inserted words to ensure that the mutual assistance to be given should be immediate. More serious was the proposed enumeration of States by name and the fact that under the Russian formula the States in the west were not fully covered. It occurred to the French Foreign Office to wonder whether the way out might not be found by reversion to the first Russian formula, which did not make specific mention of this and did not speak of defending States but of assisting them.

2. I told the Ambassador that we were giving our attention to the Russian memorandum today and were not unhopeful of finding words that would meet the difficulties to which it gave rise.

¹ See No. 697.

3. I told M. Corbin that I was disturbed by the slow progress of our negotiations and that I had been considering whether it might be possible to ask the Russians to send some representative to discuss matters with us direct in London or Paris. M. Corbin, however, was disposed to think that this would not really save much time as no Russian representative would be in any position approaching that of a plenipotentiary, and that the better course might be to give to our respective Ambassadors precise instructions on the strength of which they could themselves in Moscow sit round the table with M. Molotov and examine the two drafts, article by article. I promised that we would communicate to the French Government any decision on which, after examination of the whole situation, we might be disposed to arrive.

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

No. 716

Viscount Halifax to Sir W. Seeds (Moscow)

No. 425 [C 7845/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, June 5, 1939

Sir,

At my request Sir Lancelot Oliphant asked the Soviet Ambassador to come and see him on May 30 on his return from Geneva.

2. Sir Lancelot Oliphant told His Excellency that the Foreign Office had had considerable correspondence with Moscow about the Anglo-Soviet negotiations since His Excellency's last talk with me at Geneva and unless the Ambassador was already fully posted on the matter offered to give him the substance of this correspondence. M. Maisky replied that while passing through Paris he had seen our draft agreement with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and it had struck him as far more vague, involved and complicated than he had anticipated when he had given me at Geneva the impression that all that the Soviet Government wanted was reciprocity and a guarantee of immediate effective support.

3. Sir Lancelot Oliphant then read to the Ambassador my telegrams Nos. 117,¹ 118,² 120³ and 123⁴ to Your Excellency and your telegram No. 103.⁵ M. Maisky said that he could not blame M. Molotov for holding the views recorded in this last telegram and he then emphasised how essential it was in his own opinion to have nothing vague as a situation might at any moment arise requiring instantaneous action.

4. Sir Lancelot Oliphant then read out my telegram No. 126⁶ of 29th May. On learning of its contents M. Maisky said that this was a very material improvement and should be of great help in Moscow. Sir Lancelot Oliphant asked whether, as this telegram had given the Ambassador satisfaction, he might tell me that His Excellency would now inform his Government that

¹ No. 609.

² No. 622.

³ No. 625.

⁴ No. 634.

⁵ No. 648.

⁶ No. 662.

he was easy in his mind and hoped that they would feel similarly and get forward with the negotiations. M. Maisky said that he would certainly telegraph to Moscow that the telegram appeared to him useful and that he hoped that they would reply to you quickly. But he emphasised that he could not say what the sense of their reply would be.

I am, &c.,

HALIFAX

No. 717

Letter from Sir P. Loraine (Rome) to Sir O. Sargent

[R 4779/399/22]

BRITISH EMBASSY, ROME, *June 5, 1939*

My dear Sargent,

Very many thanks for your useful and interesting letter¹ of June 3. I appreciate your reasons for not acting on the suggestion made in my telegram No. 476² of May 23, indeed I foresaw some of them in my own mind: but I thought it nevertheless desirable to make the suggestion on the ground that if feasible at your end it would ease the situation with Mussolini without compromising anything. I understand well how delicate the position is as regards the French. Daladier's attitude fully bears out what Léger said to me on my way through Paris: and that attitude may indeed be to some extent inspired by Léger.

In my interview with Mussolini I did specifically refer to the Prime Minister's speech of May 19 (I had the text of the relevant passages in my pocket ready to produce if necessary) and Mussolini said he had noted the speech.

In my interview with Ciano last Thursday³ I again asked him whether he had studied the passage of the speech to which you refer, and he said he had read the whole speech carefully.

I will only add that I on my side have been particularly careful to avoid giving either Mussolini or Ciano an opening for suggesting that we ought to bring pressure to bear on the French to meet the Italian demands.

As regards demobilisation in Libya, it looks like being an empty card to play if we accept, as I think we must, the positive assertion of my Military Attaché, who returned a few days ago from a tour in those regions, that the Italian forces in North Africa are in no sort of state to undertake offensive operations.

If this be so, to request demobilisation there would be merely presenting Mussolini with a bargaining-counter.

I hope you had a good leave and have returned to the Office with fresh vigour.

Yours ever,

PERCY LORAINÉ

¹ No. 706.

³ See No. 698.

² No. 593.

No. 718

Mr. Gallienne (Tallinn) to Mr. Orde (Riga)

No. 9¹ Telegraphic [N 2822/64/63]

TALLINN, *June 6, 1939, 11.20 a.m.*

My telegram No. 7.²

Estonian Minister for Foreign Affairs leaves today for Berlin and he will sign the Non-Aggression Pact tomorrow.

M. Munters will also sign. Director of Political Department informs me that the Pact is similar to the Danish-German Agreement with the addition of reservation regarding Estonian-Latvian alliance.

Estonian Minister for Foreign Affairs told me he could not avoid going to Berlin but he would only stay one day.

2. Minister for Foreign Affairs said that German Minister here told him about ten days ago that their information was that Russia would evade signing the agreement with Great Britain. Firstly the question of the Baltic States would be raised and if this were settled then Russia would raise the subject of Japan.

¹ This telegram was addressed as No. 9 to Riga, and repeated as No. 9 to the Foreign Office, where it was received on June 6 at 12.15 p.m.

² Not printed.

No. 719

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 6, 4.15 p.m.)

No. 221 Telegraphic [C 8056/3356/18]

PARIS, *June 6, 1939, 2.11 p.m.*

My despatch No. 738¹ confidential of June 5 which should reach you by air bag this afternoon.

2. United States Ambassador, who has been summoned by the President to be present during visit to Washington of Their Majesties² and for the purpose of consultation, called on me this morning before leaving.

3. Mr. Bullitt of course knows Russians well from personal experience.³ He is convinced that an agreement with them is necessary, but still more convinced that we shall never reach it if we give them the impression that we are running after them. He firmly believes that we should go ahead quickly with our Polish agreement and not be in any hurry to answer last Soviet proposals.

4. Mr. Bullitt had evidently received from the French Government copies of correspondence exchanged between the Soviet and the Estonian Government enclosed in my despatch under reference, for he described the Soviet

¹ Not printed. This despatch contained the text of the note of March 28 from the Soviet Government to the Estonian Government and the latter's reply of April 7. See No. 300.

² Their Majesties The King and Queen visited the U.S.A. from June 7 to 12.

³ Mr. Bullitt had been United States Ambassador in Moscow during the years 1933-6.

Note of March 28 as a monstrous attempt to establish a (? protectorate over)⁴ Estonia.

5. His Excellency feels strongly that the latest Soviet proposals should be closely scrutinized in the lurid and sinister light of that Note. He declares that if a word in our future agreement with Russia . . .⁴ two meanings, of which one is quite ridiculous, that is the meaning the Soviet will attach to it if it suits their book.

Repeated to Moscow.

⁴ The text is here uncertain.

No. 720

Viscount Halifax to Sir W. Seeds (Moscow)

No. 129 Telegraphic [C 7970/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, June 6, 1939, 6.0 p.m.

Your telegram No. 114.¹

We are now engaged on drafting of reply to latest Soviet communication. We hope to meet the main points to which Soviet Government attach importance, but there are others which will require further discussion and adjustment.

It seems to me difficult to carry matters through their last stages to a successful conclusion by the method of exchange of telegrams, and it has occurred to me that it would be much more satisfactory, and in the end more expeditious, if you could return here for a thorough discussion of all outstanding points, which would put you fully in possession of views of His Majesty's Government and motives which have guided them.

I hope therefore that you may come to London as early and as rapidly as may be. You could then, after a day or two here, take our draft reply back to Moscow, and you would be armed with the necessary arguments to enable you to discuss it in detail with the Soviet Government.

I am asking His Majesty's Ambassador in Paris also to come to London² so that, with his help and that of the French Ambassador here, we may hope to be assured of the concurrence at all points of the French Government.

Please telegraph when we may expect you.

Repeated to Paris.

¹ No. 697.

² Instructions to this effect were sent to Sir E. Phipps on June 6.

No. 721

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw)

No. 190 Telegraphic [C 7970/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, June 6, 1939, 7.20 p.m.

Following for Mr. Strang.¹

We are telling our Ambassador in Moscow to come to London by the quickest possible means in order to receive a full explanation of the attitude

¹ See No. 659, note 2.

of His Majesty's Government and to take back with him their latest proposals for communication to the Soviet Government.

Sir W. Seeds may wish to be accompanied on his return by an expert from the Foreign Office, and we may accordingly have to call upon you.

Please, therefore, telegraph the itinerary of your homeward journey and be prepared to return here at a moment's notice on receipt of a further telegram from me.²

Repeated to Budapest.

² Mr. Strang replied on June 7 that he was leaving for Budapest on June 8 and would return to London on June 9.

No. 722

Viscount Halifax to Sir W. Seeds (Moscow)

No. 130 Telegraphic [C 7970/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, June 6, 1939, 8.0 p.m.

My telegram No. 129.¹

You should explain to M. Molotov the reason why you are proceeding to London, making it clear that the intention is that you should return as soon as possible with such fresh instructions as should, it is hoped, enable you to clear up with M. Molotov the points still outstanding and to proceed, with as little delay as possible, to the actual conclusion of the intended tripartite agreement.

2. Your recall home will be announced in the House of Commons tomorrow afternoon.

Repeated to Paris.

¹ No. 720.

No. 723

Sir M. Palairret (Athens) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 6, 8.15 p.m.)

No. 249 Telegraphic [R 4662/661/67]

ATHENS, June 6, 1939, 8.0 p.m.

Director of Political Section informed First Secretary privately this morning that according to information given to Greek Minister in Berlin by a foreign diplomat, and probably emanating from the German Ambassador, Ankara, there has been strong reaction in Turkey (notably amongst the army officers) against Anglo-Turkish Pact. According to the same source Germany does not yet consider herself beaten and hopes to prevent the conclusion of a definite agreement between the United Kingdom and Turkey. This idea is regarded as explaining desire of German Government to maintain their commercial contracts with Turkey, also the fact that credits for 150 million marks granted to Turkey have not been revoked.

2. M. Melas asked First Secretary to make it clear that this communication was entirely informative and implied no doubt by himself on [*sic* ? or] Greek Government as to the attitude of Turkish Government. He thought,

however, that the reference to army officers was rather sinister and that it would be well to watch Herr von Papen most carefully.

Repeated to Angora and Berlin.

No. 724

Minute by Sir O. Sargent

[C 8146/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, June 6, 1939

I told M. Cambon this afternoon of the decision to recall Sir W. Seeds and Sir E. Phipps to London for consultation, and the reasons why we were doing so.

M. Cambon said he was very glad to hear this, as M. Corbin felt that the present process of exchanging memoranda with Moscow could not be expected to produce quick results, and from reports which had been received from the French Ambassador in Berlin, Herr Hitler's present frame of mind and probable plans made it important that we should be able to face him without further delay with the conclusion of our Treaty with Russia.

I put it to M. Cambon that, seeing that Sir W. Seeds was returning for consultation and for further instructions, the French Government might wish to recall their Ambassador likewise.

M. Cambon said that he would at once put this consideration to the Quai d'Orsay.¹

O. G. SARGENT

¹ A copy of this minute was sent to Sir E. Phipps by bag.

No. 725

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw)

No. 365 [C 8098/1110/55]

FOREIGN OFFICE, June 6, 1939

Sir,

I was with the Prime Minister this morning when he received the Polish Ambassador. The latter repeated to the Prime Minister what he had said to me last week¹ concerning the financial anxieties of his Government and their desire to secure as large a measure of assistance as they could from this country for the more efficient prosecution of their military effort. The Ambassador made it plain that his Government had been greatly disappointed by the reception that their requests had met with at the hands of His Majesty's Government. Poland was prepared to accept the full burden that must inevitably rest upon her in the event of war, but in order to make the fullest use of her resources in man-power, it was essential that her means of furnishing and maintaining her military equipment should be largely and rapidly strengthened.

2. The Prime Minister said that we were fully alive to the force of everything the Ambassador had urged and were anxious to give every assistance

¹ See No. 692.

that we could to the common cause in which we were both engaged. It must, however, be remembered that while it was very possible that the primary attack would fall upon Poland, this was not certain, and, even if it did, it was impossible for anyone to anticipate how long the war might last, and if it was a long war it was essential that this country should not have weakened its economic strength, on which in the last resort the prosecution of a war would largely depend. He did not wish to conceal from the Ambassador that our financial position was not as strong as it was in 1914, and the British Government was bound to have very careful regard to these most important considerations.

3. The Prime Minister suggested that it might possibly be helpful if the Polish Government were to send a mission to this country in order that representatives of both countries might have the opportunity of a perfectly frank exchange of views. By this means it would be possible for each side to appreciate fully the difficulties of the other, and, provided it was clearly understood by the Polish Government that His Majesty's Government could give no promise of being able to do more than they had hitherto suggested, the Prime Minister thought no objection need arise to discussions ranging over as wide a field as either side might desire to cover; but he emphasised the importance that if such a course were followed no ground should be given for the Polish Government feeling disappointed if such close exchange of view as he suggested did not, in fact, reveal the possibility of His Majesty's Government going further than had already been outlined.

4. The Ambassador undertook to forward the suggestion made by the Prime Minister to his Government, and in due course to make us acquainted with the result.

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

No. 726

Viscount Halifax to Sir P. Loraine (Rome)

No. 855 [R 4685/1/22]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *June 6, 1939*

Sir,

I heard from the Italian Ambassador last night to the effect that he had to go back to Italy and must accordingly excuse himself from The King's Birthday Dinner at the Foreign Office. I accordingly asked the Ambassador to call on me this morning before leaving.

2. I began by telling him of the interview that Your Excellency had recently reported with Signor Mussolini,¹ in which the latter had posed the direct question to His Majesty's Government as to whether they still thought, in view of their present policy, that there was any longer any value in the Anglo-Italian Agreement. His Excellency told me that he had received no information from his Government on this matter, and was unaware of anything that had passed in this connexion between Signor Mussolini and yourself.

¹ See Nos. 651-3.

3. I read to the Ambassador the reply that we had sent² and gave him a copy of the *aide-mémoire* as furnished to Your Excellency. Count Grandi thanked me for making the communication, and expressed the opinion that our reply was on the right lines, and was, to him, valuable confirmatory evidence of the explanations which he himself had repeatedly given to his Government as to British policy.

4. We had some general discussion upon the action taken by His Majesty's Government on lines more than familiar. In the course of this I told the Ambassador that I could readily understand that the arrangement we had made with Turkey was necessarily distasteful to Signor Mussolini, but that it was the direct consequence of the action taken by Germany in regard to Czecho-Slovakia and by Italy in regard to Albania. At this point the Ambassador interjected that the Italian *coup* in Albania would never have taken place except for the German *coup* at Prague. He proceeded to add that our guarantee to Greece had caused no flutter in Rome because Italian relations with Greece were excellent—with Turkey it was different. Ever since the Italian Government had been offered a mandate for an area in Asia Minor after the war,³ the relations with Turkey had been difficult, and Turkey had always been suspicious of Italian intentions. Accordingly, our Turkish Agreement had touched them on a sore spot.

5. I replied to the Ambassador by saying that, as I had already indicated, I appreciated that this must necessarily be so, but begged him, in the light of the *aide-mémoire* of which I had given him a copy, to reinforce in Rome the true explanation of British policy as there set out.

6. I then told the Ambassador that, while I recognised that it had been made at a private gathering at the Italian Embassy, I had, none the less greatly regretted the speech that he had seen fit to make recently.⁴ Count Grandi at once said that he had no desire to defend this speech: that he was very conscious of the unhappy effect it had created in this country; and that it was very largely because he felt embarrassed at the judgment that he knew to prevail about it that he was absenting himself from the Foreign Office dinner. He proceeded at some length and with great emphasis to impress upon me in how embarrassing a position he had been placed for the last two or three years by constant allegations of the French press that he disapproved of the pro-German policy of Signor Mussolini and Count Ciano. The French newspapers were frequently asserting that he was conducting some nature of intrigue with others in Italy against this policy, and he had felt more than once that his position here was becoming in increasing degree impossible. He had been invited not long ago to go back to Rome and become a member of the Italian Cabinet. This, however, he had declined to do, feeling that he could do little in Rome and that perhaps one day the opportunity

² See No. 708.

³ For the question of Italian claims in Asia Minor in 1919 see Series I of this Collection, Volume IV, Chapter III.

⁴ This speech was made on the occasion of a celebration of the Italo-German alliance, and contained attacks on Great Britain and France.

would come for him to be more definitely useful at this end. Accordingly, he had decided to ask leave to remain at his post. The result, so I understood, of the recurring publicity given to his alleged lack of sympathy with Italian foreign policy had, however, been to compel the Italian Government to instruct him to make the kind of speech to which I had begun by referring. I could imagine how distasteful it was to him to have found that speech published with great prominence in all the Italian press and reproduced in the press in other countries. The explanation that he put forward of this action of the Italian Government was that in view of what was generally held to be his attitude such a speech from him at this juncture was valuable support in Italy for Italian policy. There was, however, something in his point of view to be said on the other side: Signor Starace,⁵ with whom the direction of Fascist policy more and more lay, had, in view of the general commendation given in Italy to Count Grandi's discourse, felt obliged himself to send a warm message of congratulation to the Ambassador. This, Count Grandi said, was significant because he and Signor Starace had always been on somewhat distant terms.

7. The whole of the Ambassador's observations was an attempt to explain to what an extent he had been the victim of harsh and unpalatable necessity, and at one point in our conversation, in making reference to his dismissal from the Italian Foreign Office,⁶ he said that he was in the position of Christ who had fallen three times and that now apparently he had to submit to crucifixion. The Ambassador's analysis of his own misery moved me to some feeling of compassion and I told him that so far as British opinion was concerned he need not be unduly distressed, as I had no doubt that those who had any knowledge of what went on behind the scenes would be not unwilling to make the necessary allowances for his difficulties. The important thing for all of us at this time was to keep clearly before our eyes the main end which we wished to serve. If, as I believed, he honestly desired to serve the cause of understanding between Great Britain and Italy, I did not suppose he would be unduly concerned by events that did not seriously prejudice his continued discharge of this main purpose.

I am, &c.,
HALIFAX

⁵ Signor Starace was Secretary-General of the Fascist Party.

⁶ Count Grandi was Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs, 1929-32.

No. 727

Letter from Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Sir A. Cadogan

[C 8757/54/18]

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, *June 6, 1939*

I have tried in my telegram No. 232 Saving¹ of yesterday to put my appreciation of the situation here, so far as the Polish question is concerned,

¹ No. 713.

in short enough form to be readable. As far as possible I have avoided controversial points.

I have the impression that in responsible quarters the belief is growing that we mean to make war *in any case* as soon as we are ready. I interpreted Hitler's last effort at Kassel on Sunday² as warning his people to gird up their loins for another 1914-18, 'since Britain still persists in the policy of "*Delenda est Germania*"'. He may, of course, be saying this merely in order to keep the warlike spirit alive against all eventualities. In spite of the great temptation which he must have to see in action the mighty war organisation which he has built up at such immense cost in the last few years, I believe that Hitler himself, unlike some of his immediate surrounding [*sic*], wants peace and will not lightly risk a world war.

Weizsäcker, who is a reasonable man, seriously asked a colleague of mine the other day whether it was true that the British meant to make war in any case. He got the right answer but the question was symptomatic of an atmosphere. Unfortunately I did not see Neurath when he was here during the Yugoslav visit. He was not at the Opera which was the only occasion vouchsafed for diplomats to see anybody during it. He had a very long talk with Hitler while in Berlin and gave the Italian Ambassador a reassuring account of it, but when I telephoned to Neurath he had already left for Prague again. According to Attolico, who put the question direct to Neurath, the latter told him that Hitler fully realised that German unilateral action as regards Danzig would bring Britain at once into the field.

I heard today from my Latvian colleague that the road between the Polish frontier and Frankfurt on the Oder is covered with German refugees from Poland. This may be exaggerated, but there is doubtless a good deal of truth in it. Yet the Berlin papers do not mention the fact, and to my mind that tends to prove that Hitler is not immediately seeking a quarrel which may lead to world war.

Nevertheless, if we are going to find a solution with even a reasonable prospect of both being accepted by Hitler or being moderately permanent, the Poles have got to put a lot of water in their wine. I was very interested to read Osborne's recent telegram³ from the Vatican which puts the case just as I see it, even from Poland's own point of view. Burckhardt is probably all things to all men but he told my Italian colleague (who was once for six months High Commissioner in Danzig himself),⁴ when he was here the other day, that he attributed three-quarters of the blame for the exacerbation of the German-Polish situation to the Poles. Moreover, though Kennard does not agree with me, I have very good personal as well as first-hand reason for knowing that it was not so much the German seizure of Bohemia and Moravia in itself as the German double-crossing over Slovakia which upset the Poles, or at least Beck, last March. That is why I mentioned, in my telegram of yesterday, Slovakia as a possible plank of compromise.

² See No. 713, note 1.

³ The reference is probably to No. 661.

⁴ Signor Attolico was High Commissioner in Danzig, 1920-1.

If you think that, in repeating these stories, I am being pro-German or anti-Pole, I cannot help it. My one preoccupation is to find a solution which is both fair and reasonable and which affords some prospect of lasting. I am all for the strong line, now that we have force behind our words; but the corollary of 'No' is the just settlement of the grievances which made that 'No' necessary.⁵

NEVILLE HENDERSON

⁵ Sir O. Sargent commented on this letter as follows:

'Does not Sir N. Henderson beg the question when he says that we must not say "No" to a just settlement of Germany's grievances, and that he is looking for a solution which is both fair and reasonable?

'A just settlement of Germany's grievances means a compromise solution. But Hitler aims at 100 per cent. solution, if necessary by stages, i.e. (1) annexation of Danzig and the Corridor; (2) restoration of the pre-war eastern frontier of Germany; (3) reduction of Poland to a vassal State. Hitler therefore cannot accept a final settlement which we would consider a just settlement.

'If he thinks that he will involve himself in war with Great Britain and France and possibly Russia as well, he may be driven to accept a compromise solution, but the compromise will only be a temporary expedient and will by itself bring no security or stability, since Hitler will continue to wait for and work for an occasion for achieving his 100 per cent. solution.

'If, therefore, we were to find a solution of the Danzig question which is "fair and reasonable" in our view, and even if Hitler were ready to accept it, we could not tell Poland that she ought to submit to it because it would constitute a final settlement: nor could we promise her security or stability in return for the concession which she would be asked to make.

'There are, of course, certain obvious but unessential modifications which might be introduced into the Danzig régime to the advantage of everyone, Poles included, such as the replacement of the League by a body of guarantor States, the assumption by Danzig of her own foreign affairs &c. But if any compromise solution went beyond these the resulting settlement would be almost bound to produce a weaker and more insecure and more ill-balanced system than the present system, which has, it must be remembered, certain very definite merits in its favour. It maintains, for instance, a more or less even balance between Germany's racial claims and Poland's 'lebensraum' claim, and it is easy to see that under any new system resulting from a compromise solution this balance would certainly be tipped in favour of Germany and to that extent would create a Polish grievance in addition to the German one, which, of course, would be maintained in order to keep alive the 100 per cent. German claim.

'In fact, such are the circumstances that we cannot hope to find a "fair and reasonable" solution or "a just settlement" of Germany's grievances so long as Hitler and Hitler's ambitions are in control of German policy. The best one can hope is that Hitler, as a realist, will decide that the risk of forcing the issue at the present moment is too great, and that he will consequently prefer on tactical grounds to negotiate some face-saving arrangement which will serve to hold the position until he sees the moment opportune for forcing the issue. But in order to bring Hitler to this point it will be necessary for His Majesty's Government to maintain, in the words of Herr Weizsäcker, *un silence menaçant*, that is to say, wait for Hitler to make the first move and meanwhile to abstain [from] any action at Warsaw or elsewhere which might encourage Hitler to think that if he keeps up the present pressure we will sooner or later force the Poles to submit to the first instalment of his 100 per cent. aims.'

Letter from Sir P. Loraine (Rome) to Sir O. Sargent

[R 4777/1/22]

BRITISH EMBASSY, ROME, *June 6, 1939*

My dear Sargent,

In the interval between the despatch of my telegram No. 486¹ of May 28 and the receipt on June 1 of your telegram No. 257² several of my colleagues talked to me about my interview with the Duce, and were naturally curious to learn what had passed. Notably the Frenchman, the Pole, the Turk, the South African and one or two others.

The thing I have *not* said anything about was the query mark placed against the Anglo-Italian Agreement by the Duce; though the Turk seemed to guess something of the sort.

To the others I admitted that the Duce had seemed preoccupied by what he termed the policy of encirclement, as particularly exemplified by the Anglo-Turkish Declaration. This they all surmised anyway, and well they might, as the Italian press is full of it.

To the Pole I did give, in confidence, the gist of what the Duce and I had said about Poland and the effect of the British guarantee to Poland, adding that it was perhaps fortunate my having been aforetime in Warsaw,³ as I knew the roots of the case fairly well. He was evidently pleased that I had stood out on the subject. I nevertheless asked him not to telegraph to his Government but, as he was leaving very shortly himself for Warsaw, I said I had no objection to his repeating orally and confidentially to Colonel Beck what I had told him.

I hope this suits you all right.

PERCY LORAINÉ

¹ Not printed. In this telegram Sir P. Loraine stated that he had communicated the substance of his interview of May 27 with Signor Mussolini only to the United States Ambassador in Rome.

² Not printed. This telegram approved Sir P. Loraine's action.

³ Sir P. Loraine had served at Warsaw, 1919-21.

*Sir W. Seeds (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax**(Received June 7, 10.45 a.m.)**No. 117 Telegraphic [C 8097/3356/18]*MOSCOW, *June 7, 11.35 a.m.*

Your telegrams Nos. 129¹ and 130.²

I was just about to telegraph you that I am confined to bed with a temperature since last night and to suggest that in those circumstances conversations with Soviet Government should be carried on through M. Maisky.

¹ No. 720.² No. 722.

Doctor is seeing me this morning and I hope that he may perhaps allow me to travel in two or three days' time.

No. 730

Sir W. Seeds (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 7, 2.10 p.m.)

No. 118 Telegraphic [C 8104/3778/18]

MOSCOW, June 7, 1939, 2.5 p.m.

'Pravda' today referring to interest of foreign press in Anglo-Franco-Soviet negotiations states that Soviet proposals closely follow M. Molotov's statement to Supreme Council and consists of minimum conditions for organisation of a defensive front against further development of aggression in Europe. Briefly these conditions are (1) the conclusion between England, France and U.S.S.R. of an effective pact of mutual assistance against aggression: (2) the rendering of assistance by U.S.S.R. to five countries to whom England and France have already guaranteed assistance against aggression: (3) the rendering of assistance by England, France and U.S.S.R. to the three known [*sic*] Baltic States against violation by aggressors of their neutrality: and finally the conclusion of a concrete agreement on methods, form and extent of assistance.

'Pravda' continues by stating that a feature of the present stage of negotiations is that Soviet proposals not only reflect position of Government but also express will (*sic*) of Supreme Council itself.

'Pravda' then quotes extensively from articles favourable to Soviet point of view in 'Sunday Times', 'Observer' and various French newspapers such as 'Le Soir', 'Epoque' and 'Victoire'.

No. 731

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora)

No. 226 Telegraphic [R 4566/661/67]

FOREIGN OFFICE, June 7, 1939, 3.20 p.m.

Your telegram No. 272.¹

1. Point (a).

General clause referring to identity of views was omitted for reasons quoted by you in paragraph 2. I should, however, if the Turkish Government desire, be perfectly prepared to agree to a repetition of such reference in the interim understanding. If the Turkish Government wish this perhaps they would suggest a form of words.

2. Point (b).

In my view the object of the interim understanding is to clear up certain loose ends, and in particular to bring into harmony the obligations of His Majesty's Government and the Turkish Government in the specific cases of

¹ No. 703.

Greece and Roumania. The interim understanding will in no way either modify or supersede the obligations undertaken by His Majesty's Government and the Turkish Government in the Declaration of the 12th May, of which clause 3 specifically provides for direct Anglo-Turkish mutual assistance in the event of any Turco-Italian or Anglo-Italian war. For these reasons it seems to me unnecessary to elaborate this aspect further in the interim understanding.

3. I agree that you should if necessary use with Minister for Foreign Affairs further arguments proposed by you in paragraph 3.

4. I also agree with your proposal to keep your French colleague informed in the manner you suggest. I have for my part communicated to the French Government direct instructions which I have communicated to you.

No. 732

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw)

No. 191 Telegraphic [C 7589/54/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *June 7, 1939, 4.15 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 176.¹

1. From points 3 and 4 of your telegram it seems that there may be some misunderstanding.

2. I had not intended that Scandinavian Governments should be asked to intervene now, or to offer their mediation or their assistance in seeking an ultimate solution. What I had in mind was to explore the possibility of reaching some understanding with them so that, in the event of an acute crisis suddenly arising, they could be invited, with some hope of success, to offer their good offices with a view to presenting² or at least delaying, a precipitation of the crisis. I fully appreciate the difficulties inherent in any such proposal—but I think it is worth putting to M. Beck.

3. I do not know whether he would think it possible to sound them on these lines, or whether he would like me to do so.

¹ No. 607.

² In the telegram as drafted this word read 'preventing'.

No. 733

Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) and

Mr. O'Malley (Budapest)

No. 193¹ Telegraphic [C 8097/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *June 7, 1939, 5.10 p.m.*

Following for Mr. Strang.

My telegram No. 190.²

Sir William Seeds is unable to come to London owing to indisposition.

In the circumstances it has been decided to send you to Moscow and I

¹ No. 193 to Warsaw, No. 30 to Budapest.

² No. 721.

should be accordingly grateful if you would now return to London by the quickest possible means in order to obtain instructions.

No. 734

Viscount Halifax to Sir W. Seeds (Moscow)

No. 132 Telegraphic [C 8097/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *June 7, 1939, 6.40 p.m.*

Your telegram No. 117.¹

I am sorry to hear of your indisposition and rather than ask you to make the journey to London as soon as you are able to travel, I have decided instead to send someone to Moscow with full instructions in order to assist you in the further negotiations with M. Molotov.

I will let you know as soon as possible the details of the arrangement I have in view.

I don't think that it would save any time to transfer the discussions to London as I doubt whether M. Maisky would be given any latitude in negotiating.

Repeated to Paris.

¹ No. 729.

No. 735

Viscount Halifax to Sir W. Seeds (Moscow)

No. 131 Telegraphic [C 8174/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *June 7, 1939, 7.0 p.m.*

Following is text of statement made by Prime Minister in House of Commons this afternoon.¹

Begins.

For reasons which the House will appreciate, it has not been possible to give day-to-day information as to the progress of the negotiations for an agreement between Great Britain, France and the U.S.S.R. A stage has, however, now been reached which enables me to supplement the statement which I made on May 24.²

It appears from the last exchange of views with the Soviet Government that there is general agreement as to the main objects to be attained. His Majesty's Government have, I think, been able to satisfy the Soviet Government that they are, in fact, prepared to conclude an agreement on the basis of full reciprocity. They have also made it clear that they are ready, immediately and without any reserve, to join with the French Government in giving the U.S.S.R. full military support in the event of any act of aggression against her involving her in hostilities with a European Power. It is not intended that the military support which the three Powers would agree to extend to

¹ See Parl. Deb., 5th Ser., H. of C., vol. 348, cols. 400-2.

² See No. 608.

one another should be confined to a case of actual aggression upon their own territory. It is possible to imagine various cases in which any one of the three Governments might feel that its security was indirectly menaced by the action of another European Power. These cases have been reviewed in detail and I hope that it may be possible now to suggest a formula acceptable to the three Governments which, while having regard to the rights and interests of other States, will assure co-operation between those Powers in resistance to aggression.

There remain one or two difficulties to be resolved, in particular the position of certain States which do not want to receive a guarantee on the ground that it would compromise the strict neutrality which they desire to preserve. It is manifestly impossible to impose a guarantee on States which do not desire it, but I hope that some means may be found by which this difficulty, and any others which may arise in the adjustment of the general points on which there is now no difference between the three Governments, shall not stand in the way of giving the greatest effect to the principle of mutual support against aggression.

In order to accelerate the negotiations, it has been decided to send a representative of the Foreign Office to Moscow to convey to His Majesty's Ambassador there full information as to the attitude of His Majesty's Government on all outstanding points. I hope that by this method it will be possible more rapidly to complete the discussion that is still necessary to harmonise the views of the three Governments and so to reach final agreement.

Ends.

Repeated to Berlin, Warsaw, Riga, Helsingfors, Bucharest, Angora, Rome, Cairo and Paris.

No. 736

Mr. Shepherd (Danzig) to Viscount Halifax

(Received June 7, 9.12 p.m.)

No. 54 Telegraphic [C 8168/54/18]

DANZIG, June 7, 1939, 8.25 p.m.

Warsaw telegram No. 188.¹

I agree with opinions expressed in the first paragraph. Both Danzig newspapers today give front page prominence to a seemingly frivolous allegation of espionage by two Polish Customs Inspectors at Schiewenhorst, professing to regard alleged appointment in Danzig of thirty-one additional Polish Inspectors since Kalthof tragedy as part of an organisation of Polish espionage. Newspapers also express indignation at return to Danzig of the Polish Customs official concerned in that tragedy.

2. With reference to paragraph 2 of Warsaw telegram I learn from Böttcher that the German cruiser 'Königsberg' will visit Danzig from August

¹ No. 712.

23 to August 25 for ceremonies to commemorate the loss 25 years ago of the German warship 'Magdeburg'.

Repeated to Berlin and Warsaw.

No. 737

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax
(Received June 8, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 279 Telegraphic [R 4690/661/67]

ANGORA, June 7, 1939, 11.3 p.m.

I read Sir M. Palairet's telegram No. 249¹ to Minister for Foreign Affairs.

2. He replied that the whole country was united in support of Anglo-Turkish Pact; it had never been so unanimous about anything.

3. He is fully alive to possibility of intrigue but feels no anxiety.

4. As regards the army he is equally confident. He told me German Ambassador had left a card on his former Turkish Commanding Officer. The latter had been allowed to send a return card. Beyond this nothing seems to have occurred.

Repeated to Athens and Berlin.

¹ No. 723.

No. 738

Sir H. Knatchbull-Hugessen (Angora) to Viscount Halifax
(Received June 8, 9.30 a.m.)

No. 280 Telegraphic [E 4154/9/44]

ANGORA, June 7, 1939, 11.5 p.m.

My telegram No. 277.¹

German Ambassador has seen the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the President of the Republic.

2. Their general impression is that, so far, German reaction to Anglo-Turkish negotiations is milder than they had expected.

3. Herr von Papen brought no proposal from the German side but seems to have confined himself to warning Turkey that she was binding herself to the side which was preparing for war and to a vague hint that if the final Anglo-Turkish agreement appeared contrary to German interests Turco-German relations would suffer.

4. As regards commercial relations German intention seems to be to continue on the present footing until the conclusion of the final agreement when they will review the situation. In reply to question by Minister for Foreign Affairs Herr von Papen seems to have been reassuring even about war material with the exception of heavy guns (see my telegram No. 248²).

¹ Not printed. This telegram of June 4 reported the return of Herr von Papen to Angora.

² Not printed. This telegram of May 25 reported delays in the delivery of war material from Germany to Turkey.

He nevertheless indicated the possibility of ultimate embargo on exports of munitions and the Turkish Government are going slow as regards the export of chrome and cereals to Germany. Minister for Foreign Affairs pointed out to Herr von Papen that if Germany cut off the supply of munitions Turkey would be obliged to cease export to Germany of corresponding value of Turkish goods, otherwise balance would be heavily against Turkey.

5. Minister for Foreign Affairs derived from Herr von Papen's conversation a vague impression that the latter was trying to convince him of Germany's pacifist [*sic* ? pacific] intentions and of her readiness to discuss outstanding problems with His Majesty's Government. He suggested that there were two objects in this (a) to convince Turkish Government of the uselessness of Anglo-Turkish negotiations and (b) that these sentiments should be passed on to ourselves.

No. 739

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 7)

No. 343 Saving: Telegraphic [R 4688/7/22]

PARIS, June 7, 1939

The semi-official 'Temps' states tonight that M. Bonnet on June 6 again received M. Coulondre, the French Ambassador at Berlin, who is returning to his post.

2. M. Bonnet, it is added, also had a conversation with the Italian Ambassador. This conversation, according to authorised circles, dealt only with administrative questions, such as the banning of newspapers and the expulsion and arrest of nationals of the two countries. The date of the conversation had been fixed several days ahead, and it was purely by coincidence that the Italian Ambassador at London was received on the same day at the Foreign Office.¹

3. The above statement is, no doubt, intended to dissipate the impression created by certain newspapers, which deduced from the reception of Count Grandi² and Signor Guariglia at the Quai d'Orsay on the same day, that important conversations were taking place between the Italian and the French and British Governments.

Copy sent to Rome.

¹ See No. 726.

² At the Foreign Office.

No. 740

Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax (Received June 8)

No. 344 Saving: Telegraphic [C 8137/3356/18]

PARIS, June 7, 1939

I was with Minister for Foreign Affairs this afternoon when M. Corbin informed him by telephone of the intention of His Majesty's Government to send Mr. Strang to Moscow after his return from Warsaw.

2. At first M. Bonnet was inclined to think this delay somewhat unfortunate, but finally agreed with view expressed to me yesterday by United States Ambassador (my telegram No. 221¹) that best policy with Soviet is to avoid giving them the impression that one is running after them.

3. M. Bonnet says that French Ambassador at Berlin, whom he saw on June 6, feels that our eventual agreement with the Soviet is essential, for otherwise M. Coulondre fears a possible partition of Poland between Germany and Russia.

Repeated to Moscow and Berlin.

¹ No. 719.

No. 741

Minute by Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin

[C 8306/8/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, June 7, 1939

I had lunch today with Dr. Wohltat, Economic Adviser to Field-Marshal Göring,¹ and with Dr. Weber, of the German Embassy.

Dr. Wohltat said that people in Germany are beginning to ask themselves whether it is the intention of Great Britain to crush Germany, if necessary by war. I replied by saying that people over here, since the seizure of Prague, were asking themselves whether the policy of the German Government was not definitely aggressive and aimed eventually against the British Empire. I said that the atmosphere here had changed very much since that event and that a most striking proof was our guarantee to Poland, a guarantee which we would undoubtedly meet if Poland were to fight in defence of what she considers her vital interest. Herein, I said, lay the principal danger of war; I did not want to exaggerate it and I hoped that if we had an uneventful twelve months the present anxiety would die away, but that there were several elements in the picture which looked disagreeably like 1914.

Dr. Wohltat then developed an idea for an economic settlement between England and Germany. His idea was that Great Britain should recognise Germany's sphere of economic interest in South-Eastern and Eastern Europe. I asked him whether we were to take as a hypothesis the continuance of the present exchange restriction and currency control system in Germany with her sphere of interest attached to her by the present clearing systems. Dr. Wohltat said that such a hypothesis might be possible but that he had in mind a return of Germany to a liberal, or more liberal, currency policy with free, or freer, exchanges (at any rate for commercial transactions though probably not for movements of capital), and equalisation of the mark at a new parity with the pound and dollar, and an adjustment of internal prices. In this case, however, Germany, in order to develop her sphere of interest, would give a preference whether by Customs duties or some other way to imports from the S.E. and E. countries. This was the only way by which a

¹ Dr. Wohltat was in London on business connected with refugee questions.

rise in the standard of living in those countries could be promoted, since on equal terms with world production they were not in a position to compete; and it was only by maintaining their standard of living that they could be retained as satisfactory customers for German exports. The German policy, however, though preferential, would not be exclusive; and he believed that the improvement of conditions in those countries would benefit not only German but British and other trade. He pointed out that Great Britain's trade with her Empire is between 40 and 50 per cent. of her total trade; Germany's trade with South-Eastern countries is at present only 14 to 15 per cent. of the total; he thought this could be raised to 20 to 25 per cent.

I said that this hypothesis was interesting and might be considered in a more peaceful and reasonable atmosphere than the present, but that it seemed to me academic in present circumstances when political antagonism had pushed economic considerations aside. I said that M. van Zeeland's report² had provided at any rate a platform on which such matters might have been discussed, but that the German Government had preferred to pursue their political aims in Austria and Czecho-Slovakia and had ignored this opportunity, which I did not think was likely to return yet awhile. I did not think that economic overtures would lead anywhere until political questions had been settled. The dilemma seemed to me that England would not consider economic settlement with a Germany that was continuing to arm, whereas Germany seemed to think that any measure of disarmament would weaken her position in coming to negotiations. I did not see how this formidable dilemma could be removed.

Dr. Weber suggested that the Fuhrer's speech³ had left open re-negotiation of the Anglo-German Naval Agreement. He suggested that if we were to take up this offer and the Agreement were to be re-negotiated, that might give to England and Germany, and other countries, the kind of peaceful atmosphere in which a general settlement could be discussed. I said that if we were looking for a symbol for peace I thought that it would be more effective if Herr Hitler were to remodel his Cabinet and give to certain of his advisers that opportunity for leisure which their services had so amply deserved. I think that both Dr. Wohltat and Dr. Weber at heart approved of this suggestion. Dr. Wohltat said, however, that we greatly exaggerated the influence which other people have over Hitler, and that as a matter of fact, nobody has any influence over him at all.

Dr. Wohltat said, however, that any programme based on the kind of economic considerations which he had indicated would have a very wide measure of support in Germany—certainly from the Ministry of Economics and the Reichsbank, probably from Field-Marshal Göring, probably from the Army, and certainly from German industrialists and business men. He thought that it would be useful if such ideas could be discussed among

² The report presented on January 26, 1938, by M. van Zeeland to the Governments of the United Kingdom and France on the possibility of obtaining a general reduction of the obstacles to international trade is printed as Cmd. 5648 (Misc. No. 1) of 1938.

³ Herr Hitler's speech of April 28. See No. 306.

officials of the countries concerned as inconspicuously as possible in order to see whether anything can be made of them.

Dr. Wohltat is returning to Berlin tomorrow, the 8th of June. He will then be going to Spain, where he expects to find such confusion that negotiations will be difficult; and he will probably be back in England in July for the Whaling Conference.

F. A. GWATKIN

No. 742

Viscount Halifax to Sir R. Lindsay (Washington)

No. 562 [R 4729/7/22]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *June 7, 1939*

Sir,

The United States Ambassador called to see me today and, in the course of some general conversation, I told His Excellency that we were disposed to feel that French policy was being unnecessarily stiff upon the matter of initiation of any conversations with Italy and also in regard to matters arising between them and Spain. The Ambassador said that he fully shared our view and would suggest to the President that he should from his side, and independently, counsel the French to try and be somewhat more accommodating. This, he anticipated, the President would be very glad to do.

I am, &c.,

HALIFAX

No. 743

Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)

No. 1400 [C 8213/3356/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *June 7, 1939*

Sir,

The French Ambassador called to see me today, mainly to enquire as to the progress we were making with the draft of our agreement with Poland, and to ask for any information as regards our negotiations with Russia.

2. As to the first, I told His Excellency that we were pushing on with this as fast as we could, and that he could continue to assure M. Bonnet that we should lose no available time in dealing with it.

3. As regards the second, I showed the Ambassador, and gave him a copy in confidence, the kind of draft¹ by which we hoped to meet M. Molotov's last communication, although I made it plain to him that at the present moment this draft had not been approved by His Majesty's Government, and that we were still undecided as between alternative methods of meeting the problem raised by the Russian proposals for the Baltic States, and our own

¹ For this draft, known as the draft of June 6, see the instructions to Sir W. Seeds of June 12, in Volume VI of this Series.

desire to secure Russian support in the event of an attack by Germany on Holland. M. Corbin agreed that one of the worst features in the Russian draft was the attempt to make the conclusion of the agreement dependent upon the conclusion of Staff conversations. He suggested that if we found Russia very tiresome on this point, we might possibly meet them by agreeing to inaugurate the Staff conversations within a limited period, say fifteen days. He made the suggestion on the assumption that what the Russians were really afraid of was that, having got the agreement, we should be Laodicean about Staff conversations.

4. I told the Ambassador that we would have this point in mind.

I am, &c.,

HALIFAX

APPENDIX I

Additional letters on the European situation, April—May, 1939.

In addition to the letters printed above the Foreign Office archives contain copies of the following twelve letters dealing with the European situation in the period covered by this volume.

- i. Sir E. Phipps to Viscount Halifax, April 7, 1939
- ii. Sir N. Henderson to Viscount Halifax, April 26, 1939
- iii. Sir N. Henderson to Viscount Halifax, April 26, 1939
- iv. Sir E. Phipps to Viscount Halifax, April 28, 1939
- v. Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps, May 2, 1939
- vi. Sir N. Henderson to Viscount Halifax, May 4, 1939
- vii. Sir N. Henderson to Viscount Halifax, May 4, 1939
- viii. Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson, May 8, 1939
- ix. Sir N. Henderson to Viscount Halifax, May 11, 1939
- x. Sir N. Henderson to Sir A. Cadogan, May 14, 1939
- xi. Sir N. Henderson to Sir A. Cadogan, May 16, 1939
- xii. Sir N. Henderson to Sir A. Cadogan, May 31, 1939

(i)

Letter from Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax

BRITISH EMBASSY, PARIS, *April 7, 1939*

My dear Secretary of State,

Percy Loraine asked on April 4 whether I could arrange a private interview between him and Georges Bonnet, so I rang up the latter and suggested this, but I laid great stress on the vital necessity, for obvious reasons, of secrecy.

Bonnet said he would much like a talk with Loraine, and he promised that he would not even tell the office-keepers who the man was who would call on him at 4 o'clock that afternoon.

This interview duly took place and I am thankful to say that no mention of it was made in the French Press.

I enclose, herein, a letter from Loraine, giving an account of this interview, which can, I feel sure, only have done good.

I have told Loraine what an excellent fellow François-Poncet is, with all his superficial faults, and what useful work he can do at Rome if he works in wholeheartedly with his French colleague.

Yours very sincerely,
ERIC PHIPPS

ENCLOSURE IN DOCUMENT (i)

April 6, 1939

The other afternoon I had a longish talk with Georges Bonnet and it may be of some interest to you to learn broadly its upshot.

The Minister mentioned his difficulties with Turkey about the Sanjak of Alexandretta, and was evidently anxious to learn my views. With his permission I spoke very frankly indeed. I told him that, in my opinion, mistakes had been made on both sides in the handling of this difficult question, and by no means the least or the fewest on the French side. It seemed to me at the moment of my departure from Angora that the crux of the question was whether the Turks *now* had territorial ambitions as regards the Sanjak.

Massigli, from his first talks on arrival with the Turkish Government, had gained the impression that the Turks did wish to absorb the Sanjak territorially. Such intention was however quite contrary to the description of Turkish aims, which during the past two years had been given to me—it is true in personal confidence—by responsible Turkish Ministers.

At the end of my time in Angora, I had of course kept my Government informed, but it appeared to me that they wished my successor to handle any further phases of this question, if indeed any handling on the British side were called for, a disposition on the part of London which I found perfectly natural.

But if I might be bold enough to offer His Excellency some advice, it would be to set aside any mistakes or irritations that may have been in the past, for the French Government to approach the Turkish Government frankly and as equals, to explain what their aims and *desiderata* were and to seek a similar statement from the Turkish side.

I felt confident that the Turks would respond to such an attitude with complete loyalty. I urged on M. Bonnet the great desirability, in view of far more important and wider considerations, to get this Sanjak question finally and definitely settled with the Turks.

M. Bonnet asked me to develop briefly the wider considerations which I had in mind, agreeing that there certainly were wider considerations.

I therefore pointed out Turkey's very valuable work of pacification and friendship with her neighbours—many of them her former enemies in Ottoman days—on all her borders; e.g. the Balkan Entente, her friendship with Russia and the Saadabad Pact.

Another obvious factor was the Straits which she now controlled; yet another was her growing military power and the fact that she had for several years been free to place the centre of gravity of her military strength in the West of her territory, being able to leave her Northern and Eastern frontiers with very little cover.

Last but not least was the factor that the modern Turkish Republic shared the view of England and France about the ordinary decencies of international life and definitely did not wish to be drawn once again either into the military or political orbit of Germany.

These arguments appeared to impress M. Bonnet. He added that the French Government had been obliged, in view of the wider issues opened up by recent events, to re-consider their attitude towards the matter of the Franco-Syrian Treaty.¹ He did not think it would be possible for France now to ratify that Treaty. I said that this would certainly increase the difficulties of a settlement with Turkey in the matter of the Sanjak; but at the same time I felt sure that if the situation was explained in a frank and friendly manner to the Turks they would understand it, and did not think that the question of the Franco-Syrian Treaty was one that should deter the French Government from engaging discussions with the Turkish Government.

¹ The Franco-Syrian Treaty of 1936.

M. Bonnet asked me if it was true that Anglo-Turkish relations were particularly cordial.

I replied without hesitation that they were particularly friendly, confident and indeed intimate. We had established a tradition of entire frankness which the Turks had most loyally reciprocated on every occasion.

M. Bonnet asked me whether I had been able to form any view of the military value of Soviet Russia. I replied that I certainly had formed a view, though I could not claim that it was a valuable one. It was that the Russian Army, if defending its own soil, might give a fairly good account of itself, but that its co-operation outside its own frontiers would be virtually worthless; moreover, that to bring Russian forces into action outside Russian territory would very likely bring about the collapse of the present régime.

M. Bonnet told me that the opinion held by General Gamelin and the French General Staff was very similar to the one I had just expressed.

M. Bonnet asked me what were my views as regards Italy, and indicated that France would be by no means unwilling to talk with Italy, if a means and basis could be found that would satisfy the very reasonable requirements of his Government and of French opinion. He naturally pointed out that the cries of 'Corsica', 'Nice', 'Tunis', etc., in the Italian Chamber,² the acrimonious exchanges which had ensued, and the angry feeling which had been produced in France, made these matters at the present moment difficult and delicate.

I prefaced my reply by telling M. Bonnet that I had not yet had an opportunity of discussing my mission to Rome with the Secretary of State, or any of the Senior Officers at the Foreign Office, and he must therefore regard any remarks which I might make as purely personal.

I had felt myself that if the French Government could hold out some kind of olive branch to Italy, in a manner of course compatible with French dignity and essential interests, and if that action led to Franco-Italian conversations on a reasonable and mutually acceptable basis, it would be a very happy and important event.

Any attempts to detach Italy from the Axis would, in my purely personal view, be a mistake and indeed might well defeat their own object. If it was true that Italy was beginning to fear the growing dominance of her German partner in the Axis, it would seem far better tactics to show Italy that England and France were still fundamentally friendly to her and to let the circumstances talk for themselves and indicate that the door to friendship and co-operation with England and France was certainly not closed. At the moment the British door was certainly open, and the Italians knew it. A similar state of affairs as regards Italy and France would be a great asset.

It seemed to me just possible that Mussolini in his latest utterance, when he said that Italy was willing to share the Adriatic with the Slavs,³ may have been giving an indirect indication that he on his side was willing to talk with Riverain Powers of Seas which had as much interest in Italy as the Adriatic.

M. Bonnet did not disagree with what I said, and I gained the impression that he himself would be willing indeed to talk with Italy if a reasonable basis could be found.

² On November 30, 1938. See Volume III of this Series, Nos. 461, 464, and 465.

³ On March 26, at Rome, on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the foundation of Fascism, Signor Mussolini had said that Italy's interests in the Adriatic were pre-eminent though not exclusive as far as the Slavs were concerned.

PS. I have not sent a copy of this letter to the Secretary of State or anyone else. You will of course do just as you please about this.

P.

(ii)

Letter from Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, April 26, 1939

Dear Secretary of State,

I have not much to say about first impressions on my return here. I am going to see Weizsäcker this morning to give him the information about the Prime Minister's statement in the House of Commons this afternoon.¹ Your telegram² only reached me after midnight last night and when I rang up Weizsäcker this morning myself, he said at once that Ribbentrop would be engaged all the morning with the Yugoslav Minister for Foreign Affairs. A plausible excuse—to which I cannot take exception—but I have little doubt but that Ribbentrop wishes to indicate that he is in no hurry to see me. I do not propose to play his game by registering any emotion whatsoever and all that I am afraid is that the Press or B.B.C. will play it for him. All I shall personally do is to make some comment to Weizsäcker about the futility of my returning if the Minister for Foreign Affairs makes himself inaccessible. Ribbentrop is bad enough as it is but it is only natural that, having been disgusted at the withdrawal of the Ambassadors, he wishes to mark the point that he is not thrilled at their return.

The 'best-informed of my colleagues' to whom I referred in my telegram No. 324³ of yesterday is, as you will have deduced from the context, the Italian Attolico. His general language to me was very much on the lines of Mussolini's remarks to Perth at his farewell audience.⁴

Personally I feel greater anxiety than I ever did last September. And yet the immediate outstanding questions are comparatively unimportant in themselves and so easily capable of settlement. If Danzig had gone German six months ago no one would have worried and an extra-territorial corridor over the Corridor is a perfectly just arrangement. If Scotland were separated from England by an Irish corridor, we would want at least what Hitler now demands. Taken by themselves it would be wicked to drift into a world war for the sake of these points. Can we allow the Polish Government to be too uncompromising in regard to them? Now that we are introducing a form of conscription, it seems to me that we have more right than ever to insist on conciliation both at Warsaw and at Paris. There is too much resemblance in this Polish question to that of Benes and the autonomy of the Sudeten last year for my peace of mind. I cannot bring myself to believe that the policy of a show-down now rather than later has any moral or practical justification.

I am afraid we are going to have some unpleasant moments. Well, what we have first to see is what Hitler will tell the world on Friday.⁵

Yours ever,

NEVILLE HENDERSON

¹ i.e. the announcement of conscription.

² No. 284.

³ No. 281.

⁴ See No. 242.

⁵ April 28. See No. 313.

(iii)

Letter from Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, April 26, 1939

Dear Secretary of State,

Is it not possible to give the *whole* of the British Press a grave warning of its heavy responsibilities. Many years ago a German Ambassador in London said 'if there is war between England and Germany, it will be the work of the Press'. History may, I fear, prove him right. I am telegraphing today¹ on the subject of Hitler's speech. I haven't seen the British Press about my return but I have the D.T. with headlines 'British Ambassador to warn Hitler'. That sort of thing does such infinite harm, and I hear the B.B.C. had something very unsuitable about my seeing Ribbentrop. The Press is making diplomacy impossible; whatever one tries to do is frustrated by the Press or the Radio or by reckless questions in Parliament. I know that your task is rendered even more unenviable by these sort of things. But it is such a serious menace to civilisation that I cannot forbear to write bitterly about it.

I do hope that—if possible and always provided if possible—our Press comments on Hitler's Friday speech will be helpful and not disastrous. He is bound to be bitter in detail but will he leave a loophole? If he does let us concentrate on the loophole and not on the bad sides.

Yours ever,
NEVILLE HENDERSON

¹ See No. 288.

(iv)

Letter from Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax

BRITISH EMBASSY, PARIS, April 28, 1939

My dear Secretary of State,

My telegram No. 189¹ of April 27.

Daladier was not at the luncheon yesterday where I expected him. He was, however, today at the Roumanian luncheon for the French Government, etc., and I was able to detach him afterwards from Albert Sarraut and others.

I did not give away that Bonnet had told me about François-Poncet's satisfactory talk with Ciano, but I said that now that His Majesty's Government had taken a step which I knew had caused him and the French in general so much pleasure, I hoped he on his side would give great pleasure to His Majesty's Government by losing no chance of establishing contact with the Italian Government. If the latter showed themselves unreasonable he (M. Daladier) could respond by a resounding 'mot de Cambronne', and nobody would be any the worse off. If, on the other hand they were reasonable it would make a very great difference to the whole international situation.

Daladier, who is absolutely delighted with us over conscription, again promised to give the matter his earnest consideration. He did not, however, tell me about the Ciano-François-Poncet conversation; but I feel it will be difficult for him to ignore it, or to refuse to allow François-Poncet to keep the ball rolling.

I have talked in the last few days to Campinchi, Reynaud, Sarraut and Mandel

¹ No. 298.

about Italy, without arousing their suspicions by any over-emphasis. They are all rabid on the subject, and feel strongly that moderation towards the Italian gangsters is positively dangerous and encourages the latter to ask for more and ever more.

Bonnet drove me back to the Quai d'Orsay after luncheon. He was delighted I had spoken again to Daladier (without giving him—Bonnet—away). He showed me in the strictest confidence an ultra-private letter he had just had from François-Poncet, reporting certain private impressions on his talk with Ciano. François-Poncet feels it would be utterly criminal to let this chance slip. He does not believe that the Italians are laying a trap for the French in order to wreck the latter's prestige with the natives of North Africa (this was the fear Daladier expressed to me in our first conversation). He urges the strictest secrecy, however. Bonnet also feels all may be lost if the 'numerous enemies of peace' get wind of the talk at the Palazzo Chigi.

Bonnet will tell me when he wants me to attack Daladier again. Meanwhile I am glad to see that you spoke to Corbin on April 26.²

Bonnet remarked to me 'You know Daladier is easier to influence than I am!' When saying this he looked both sly and proud. At the same time he was good enough to remark that I *had* an influence over Daladier.

Yours very sincerely,
ERIC PHIPPS

² See No. 296.

(v)

Letter from Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps (Paris)

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 2, 1939

My dear Phipps,

A line to thank you for your letter of the 28th of April.¹ You will have got a letter which I wrote to you yesterday² which in part deals with the matter on which you write.

I have just had a long talk to Grandi, fresh back from Rome. He left me under no doubt that Mussolini wanted to get on with Franco-Italian conversations and that, as he put it, felt himself in great difficulty about exercising his influence with Hitler unless his position could be reinforced. This he developed by saying that his position was not as strong as it was last September owing to the enhancing of German prestige by Czechoslovakia and owing to the fact that last September Mussolini was a creditor of Germany in the matter of Austria. Grandi said, though this is probably not true, that the Italian press had been very much better of recent months than the French press and that in December Mussolini had made, very courageously, a speech to the Fascist Party in which he told them straight out that he was not making any territorial claims against France.

I understood from Corbin yesterday that the nigger in the wood-pile of Ciano's conversation with François-Poncet was the 1896 Agreement about Tunis. But surely it is not necessary for the French to suppose that because they start talking they must necessarily give Musso everything he wants. For example, he asks for two Directors on the Suez Canal Board, but I should guess he would be quite

¹ Document (iv) in this Appendix.

² It has not proved possible to trace any record of a letter on or about this date from Viscount Halifax to Sir E. Phipps in the Foreign Office archives.

satisfied for the present at all events if he got one. And it does seem to me to be vitally important to mobilise him for Danzig. The upshot of my talk with Grandi was to leave on my mind a very clear impression that he would wish to be so mobilised, but he must have something with which to strengthen his position. I cannot see what the French risk by willingness to talk. Grandi spoke, not I fancy without some cause, about the bad psychology of the Quai d'Orsay. You will realise that a great deal of what I have said is confidential, but it will be useful as a background.

I saw Tilea, the Roumanian Minister here, this afternoon. He said that Daladier had informed Gafencu that he was going to get rid of Bonnet quite shortly and was either going to take over himself or to have someone much closer to himself than Bonnet was. I hold no particular brief for Bonnet, but we don't want Daladier to develop into another Poincaré!

HALIFAX

(vi)

Letter from Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, May 4, 1939

Dear Secretary of State,

Göring slipped away unheralded and unsung to San Remo yesterday.

On the other hand Ribbentrop's departure for the Italian lakes tonight and his projected meeting with Ciano there is announced this morning with a blare of trumpets, albeit we are assured that it is a normal 'prise de contact' with no sinister designs behind it.

This illustrates, I think, the respective positions of the two men in Hitler's esteem at the moment. Göring's shares are low. I hear, though I cannot guarantee it, that the latter came back from Italy last month with counsels of moderation. He probably sensed the lack of enthusiasm in Italy. When he aired these views to Hitler, the latter abruptly told him before others not to be an 'old woman' ('weibisch'). If true, rather a humiliating experience for the gallant Field-Marshal.

Ribbentrop gave me the impression of being very tired and the long-winded speech he made to me lacked vitality. I am convinced that his visit to Lake Como is in reality a form of rest cure, with the Ciano visit stuck in to give it importance. Not the other way round.

Yours ever,
NEVILLE HENDERSON

(vii)

Letter from Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, May 4, 1939

Dear Secretary of State,

I happened to meet Prince Philip of Hesse a few days ago. He married the King of Italy's daughter and has always been in close touch with Hitler to whom he has ready access. He can moreover be counted upon to give a faithful account to Hitler of what one says.

I consequently spoke to him at some length and very frankly. He admitted without hesitation the inevitable change in British public opinion as the result of Hitler's action at Prague and breach of faith with the Prime Minister and he

accepted as a matter of course that an armed Polono-German conflict would at once end in an Anglo-German war.

While I have no doubt at all that he went straight off to Hitler to repeat all this, he himself insisted very strongly upon the reasonableness and even generosity of Hitler's offer to Poland. I am afraid that is the universal view of all those Germans who don't want war.

I am sorry I missed seeing Göring before he left but I did not want, after all the lamentable British Press comments on my return and so-called 'rebuff by Ribbentrop', to give the impression of running after any German. I confess that I do not feel well-disposed at the moment towards our Press nor those who might have given them guidance.

Yours ever,
NEVILLE HENDERSON

(viii)

Letter from Viscount Halifax to Sir N. Henderson (Berlin)

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 8, 1939

My dear Henderson,

Thank you for your letter of the 4th May.¹ I was interested to hear of your conversation with Prince Philip of Hesse.

I do not quite follow the concluding words of your letter. As you know, any guidance given to the Press by the Foreign Office is given under my authority and instructions. The Press very often will not be guided.

Yours ever,
HALIFAX

¹ Document (vii) in this Appendix.

(ix)

Letter from Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, May 11, 1939

Dear Secretary of State,

The new United States Chargé d'Affaires, Kirk, who has arrived here from Moscow, came to see me this morning. He spoke with great earnestness about the unwisdom of counting upon any effective support from Russia, in the event of war, whatever she might say or promise. Stalin was considering purely his and Russia's own interests which would be to sit still and do nothing while Europe destroyed itself and communism spread.

The French Ambassador who was for two years at Moscow before coming here six months ago is of the same opinion as regards the inefficacy of Russian help, except that he thinks that Russia can scarcely afford to let Germany win.

The Italian Ambassador here (whose name I promised that I would not mention except by private letter to you) told me yesterday that before the Ciano-Ribbentrop meeting at Milan this last week there had been no prior intention of entering upon a military alliance which Italy had so far avoided. The decision to do so had been taken in consequence of the continuation of our negotiations with Turkey and Russia, the former of which Italy presumably regarded as being directed against herself.

When I asked why then Ribbentrop had taken Gaus, his Legal Adviser with him, Attolico replied that he always went everywhere with Ribbentrop since he was the only man in the Ministry who could draft a communiqué or even a letter. Nor indeed had Gaus had anything else to draft at Milan as the drafting of the terms of the military alliance was only to begin today at Berlin. (I do not think that Attolico himself was very happy about the tightening of the military bonds with Germany.)

I also heard from Attolico (who had had it from the Esthonian Minister here) that Esthonia and Latvia had spontaneously asked for a German guarantee on the day before Hitler's speech in the Reichstag (April 28) and that it was their doing so which had induced Hitler in that speech to offer guarantees all round to those who might solicit them. The Esthonian Minister had apparently said that it was the British advances to the U.S.S.R. which had induced the two countries to reinsure with Germany.

I write these things instead of telegraphing lest this sort of information runs counter to your policy.

I have however telegraphed today (see my telegram No. 371¹) what Attolico said about it being the policy of Germany and Italy to wait as regards Danzig for two months in the 'hope that after a lull more reasonable councils [*sic* ? counsels] will prevail'. I am inclined to believe that that is, in fact, at the moment the policy of Hitler. I cannot say more than that. As I have repeatedly observed, Hitler is the past-master of turning incidents to suit his own ends; witness Schuschnigg and his plebiscite, Benes and the May 21 crisis last year and the Slovak incident this year. But provided no incident be provoked (by Poles as many Germans fear or by Nazi extremists as others fear) I hope that we can count on those two months. But not more. (I subsequently talked to Attolico of two or three months and he corrected me by saying two.)

If we do get those two months I hope that the time will not be lost. Attolico spoke to me of the Vatican proposal and mentioned that Mussolini would deplore any mention therein of the Franco-Italian difficulties, which were essentially capable of bilateral solution. He also regarded any immediate Vatican proposal as premature and as coming too soon after the Roosevelt offer. Its timing and form in fact may be all-important. Personally I see no other possible arbitrator than the Pope, and it is a hopeful sign that Hitler apparently did not turn down the suggestion out of hand. Certainly if it is left to the Poles and the Germans, the end will be disastrous.

In the meantime what gives me most concern is the refugee question. The last paragraph of 'The Times' Berlin correspondent's report in the May 10 issue of that paper² is illuminating in that respect. I had heard that Lutze had gone off to visit the camp at Rummelsburg. So far the German papers have not gone off the deep end in this respect but it will have to be closely watched. It was the refugee question which was largely responsible for Hitler's intransigence at Godesberg last September and I personally believe that it was the German press report on the previous day of three thousand refugees flying from Brünn to Austria which finally induced Hitler on 12th March this year to order the occupation of Prague and to decide on the annexation of Bohemia, etc.

I asked Attolico if at the Ciano meeting Ribbentrop had given any indication of not appreciating our attitude as regards Danzig and the inevitability of world war

¹ No. 486.

² See No. 486, note 1.

in the event of aggression. (I had spoken to Attolico about this before he went to Milan.) Attolico assured me that Ribbentrop's language had been perfectly correct on this point. One thing to remember is that part of the general feeling here that England will not fight about Danzig is due to the German belief in their Führer that he always gets what he wants without fighting. And, in point of fact, it matters little what others think, but only what Hitler thinks himself.

NEVILLE HENDERSON

(x)

Letter from Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Sir A. Cadogan

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, May 14, 1939

Ever since I got back to Berlin I have used substantially but one language to all the Germans (and diplomats) whom I meet, namely to the effect that compulsory military service in England is the proof, in deeds, of the earnestness of our intention to resist by force any further aggression by force on the part of Germany. I make it equally clear that, if war results from unilateral German action as regards Danzig, it will not be over the question of Danzig in itself, which we would gladly see settled by bilateral agreement between Poland and Germany, but will be a matter of principle, namely the necessity of resistance to the German method, as unfortunately proven by her action in respect of Prague on March 14, of making brute force the sole arbiter in international affairs. I equally explain that what the Germans call encirclement is nothing of the sort but is in fact and simply and solely an attempt to organise resistance to aggression.

You have now given me a model text in your telegram No. 150¹ of May 11, and I shall of course conform to it as closely as possible particularly if I get a chance of a conversation with any members of the High Command. My staff will also use the same language and it is in the end the sum of our efforts which will count. I am fully alive to the necessity of leaving no stone unturned to correct possible false impressions and quite apart from every other consideration one is far too opposed to war and convinced of the grave danger of it to neglect any chance to make the position clear to Germans in the hope of avoiding it.

At the same time let us not place too much reliance on the spoken word. In the latter end it will not be what the Prime Minister or the Secretary of State may say in London or I in Berlin which will influence Hitler's actions and decisions, but his own judgment based on the facts at his disposal. He will scarcely be prepared to risk a world war, unless he estimates his chances of winning it as heavily in his favour. Both Ribbentrop and Weizsäcker have said to me, since I came back: 'The Führer will judge by deeds not words' and I am inclined to regard this remark as coming from the oracle himself.

Personally I find it hard to believe that Hitler and the more responsible of the Germans fail to appreciate the position. The talk about England not being prepared to implement her guarantee to Poland or regarding Danzig as outside it bears to my mind the stamp of propaganda rather than of conviction. It is German policy to persuade the smaller Powers of our lack of will. A great deal of that kind of talk is, I feel sure, purposely put about and its correction is a matter, in this respect, for all our missions abroad and not merely Berlin and Rome. Admittedly, apart from policy, there are many who honestly believe it and still

¹ See No. 431. This telegram was dated May 9; telegram No. 157 to Berlin (No. 489) was sent on May 11.

more for whom the wish is father to the thought, since there is a real desire, not only on the part of the army but of the nation to have a go at Poland, provided that 'go' be localised. In that respect the Germans are far more united than they ever were over Sudetens or Czechs and it constitutes one of the gravest dangers of the situation. Hitler knows quite well that he could rally the whole nation behind him—and particularly if the Poles were so foolish as to provoke him.

Do not fancy that I am denying the utility of words. I do what I can here though there may be some so deaf that they won't hear. The Prime Minister's speech at the Albert Hall² can scarcely have been other than salutary. Though the German press only published extracts of it, Hitler will surely have read a translation *in toto*: and others can do so if they wish. I advised one of the Reichsministers, Darré, the other night to do so. He said at once that he would: he did not say that he could not get hold of the text.

But facts are still better than words and if the Germans study anything abroad, it is London and what people are doing and saying there. The season for parties is over, but those Germans who have recently returned from London and whom I have chanced to meet seem under no illusions and spread accounts of their impressions. The successful enforcement of our military service bill is, for instance, more calculated to have decisive effect than any words, even from the Prime Minister or the Secretary of State, not to mention any of mine.

Moreover there is another side of the question. If some Germans count on our not letting loose a world war over Danzig, others fear that our aim is in any case to attack Germany as soon as we feel strong enough. It is not impossible that Hitler in the end may think his chances better now than later, when we will be still more prepared. If he takes the risk over Poland, it is at least as likely that that will be the real reason, that and the fear of an economic collapse and the popularity of the Polish cause, rather than failure to appreciate the British determination to oppose by force further aggression be it over Danzig or elsewhere. Indeed, as I have reported officially, Ribbentrop seemed more inclined to believe that we meant to attack Germany anyway than to doubt whether Danzig would furnish us with an adequate pretext. Personally I believe that there is at least as much danger in the German belief in our desire to crush her before she gets too strong as there is in their belief that they can get away with Danzig without war. I remember that Göring told me that he felt that way in February and how much more must he feel so since March. Many Germans in fact believe that there are forces in England who do regard a war as inevitable and, if so, better now than later. I regretfully wonder myself whether this latter view may not be the right one. Will not Germany in five or ten years time be still and much more formidable than she is to-day? If so, is it not a case of better now than later, if war has got to be?

Nevertheless I still pray with my whole heart that it need not be and therefore you can rely on my doing or rather saying what I can to prevent its outbreak over any misunderstanding as to the reality of our determination not to put up with a second Prague. And equally so, if you agree, to prevent Germany from believing that her destruction is a fixed policy of His Majesty's Government.

Though I apologise for the length of this letter, I venture to add to it the accompanying interesting account by Colonel Mason-MacFarlane of his recent contacts with German officers.

NEVILLE HENDERSON

² See No. 510, note 2.

BERLIN, May 15, 1939

The Ambassador.

In the course of several conversations during the past fortnight with German Officers, who have raised the question of Danzig and the Corridor, I have consistently urged that Danzig is in itself only the temporary focus of trouble; that England is making a stand against 'Machtpolitik'; and that we will certainly fight in support of our principles.

I have found that most officers genuinely agree with me on the following points. Firstly, that Herr Hitler made a great political mistake in seizing Bohemia and Moravia before completing his 'Heim ins Reich' programme. Secondly, that it cannot be expected that in the meantime anyone will believe any assurance or pledge given by Herr Hitler. And, thirdly, that England has no aggressive intentions. On the other hand they are determined that Danzig and the Corridor must return to Germany, and insist that the Corridor question has all along been by far the most impossible of the impositions of Versailles. They are distressed at the fact that Herr Hitler's actions have turned the Danzig and Corridor question, as far as England is concerned, into one of what they describe as 'prestige'. It should be remembered that the German Corps of Officers is absolutely united over the Corridor question, and that most of the Senior Officers in the War Ministry are now convinced devotees of Herr Hitler.

Among other officers with whom I have discussed the situation recently are the Chief of the Attaché-Gruppe and his Sub-Chief. I had a long and very frank talk with the Chief of the Gruppe before he left on his Balkan tour, and I understand that he made a report on my remarks, which was given considerable circulation and aroused great interest. Lt.-Colonel Graf von Schwerin of the Foreign Armies Section of the War Ministry went so far as to ask my Assistant whether he knew if I was giving my personal views or 'talking to order'.

This action of Colonel Graf Schwerin's was clearly most incorrect, and I saw the Acting-Chief of the Gruppe on Friday last after lodging a strong protest. I pointed out that if anyone desired to ascertain the source of my opinions they could apply to me direct and not adopt round-the-corner methods.

The Acting-Chief of the Attaché-Gruppe apologised to me with embarrassing profuseness. He described Colonel Schwerin's action as 'unheard of' and the 'height of incorrectness'. It had been severely condemned, and he had himself spoken extremely severely to Colonel Schwerin.

He hoped that I would realise that Colonel Schwerin had been actuated largely by the great interest which my recent talks with himself and his Chief had aroused in the War Ministry. They had been all the more impressed by my statements as they realised that I understood the German point of view fully, and had always endeavoured to adopt an optimistic attitude.

I told the Acting-Chief that although the views I had expressed were my private opinions, they definitely represented the British attitude as I knew it. We were making our stand in support of principles. It might be thought in Germany that we would not be prepared to fight over Danzig. That was a fatal mistake. As far as we were concerned the issue was far greater than just Danzig.

I reminded him that I had already been at pains for some time to impress him and others in the War Ministry with this fact, and I asked him direct if the situation was at last becoming clear to the War Ministry. He said that he could assure

me definitely that this was certainly the case, and that this was largely due to the force and conviction with which I had recently spoken to him and his Chief.

F. N. MASON-MACFARLANE
Colonel, Military Attaché

(xi)

Letter from Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Sir A. Cadogan

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, May 16, 1939

The reason why, in my telegram of today reporting an interview with Weizsäcker,¹ I mentioned the facts (a) that I was not the first to speak of the stories current here of England not supporting Poland over Danzig and (b) that Weizsäcker took no notes of my carefully worded statement, is that it occurred to me that this and his language indicated that he might already have been cognisant of the text of your telegram No. 157² of May 11.

Weizsäcker is a thorough German but he is an honest man and he is certainly not a firebrand. He proved that conclusively last year over the Sudeten question. I do not think he was wilfully misleading me, when he referred to two or three months pause. He spoke with great assurance and not as he did before March 14 when he would not say much more than that whatever happened would be done in a 'decent' manner. I was not clever enough on that occasion to take the veiled hints which he did give me.

I was the more impressed this time by his language. It was clear that he, like all Germans, feel very bitterly about the Poles. They grabbed what they could after Vienna and Munich and then bit the hand that had fed them on those occasions. That is the German view nor is there a single German that I know who does not regard Hitler's offer to Poland as excessively generous and broadminded. It may be unpleasant to have to say so but it is a fact which must be fully realised if the policy of His Majesty's Government is to be carried to a successful and peaceful conclusion.

Weizsäcker was indeed just as bitter about the Poles as all of them. His last and unusually heated remark was that the only way to deal with naughty boys was to put them in a corner till they were good and that it was His Majesty's Government who were responsible for seeing that they did behave themselves. I may talk till I am hoarse that it is the Germans themselves who are to blame but if I had the eloquence of Demosthenes I would not have the slightest prospect of convincing them to the contrary.

NEVILLE HENDERSON

W. was anyway very confident about a two or 3 months pause. N. H.

¹ See No. 525.

² No. 489.

(xii)

Letter from Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Sir A. Cadogan

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, May 31, 1939

I had a long and sober talk with the Polish Ambassador after his return here from Warsaw. But it amounted to little more than that, after a pause, the Polish

Government would be quite ready to reopen negotiations provided there was evidence of German goodwill. Lipski himself, as one of the promoters of the 1934 Agreement, is, of course, far from chauvinistic.

But others are, and as it happened, the new American Chargé d'Affaires came to see me just before Lipski and told me that he had been horrified at the language used in public by the Polish Counsellor. Of course that sort of talk gets back to the Germans and loses nothing in the repeating. I thought it therefore as well to mention to Lipski that I heard that some of his staff talked rather wildly.

He, for his part, told me that the Polish minority in Germany were being very badly treated. I have no doubt that this is true. On neither side of the frontier would I care to be one of the minority just now.

Little though one may trust Stalin or count on much assistance from the U.S.S.R. I heartily wish we could quickly and safely get them in to the anti-aggression block. It will make our position one hundred per cent. stronger and enable us to play from greater strength.

Nevertheless, one always gets back to the same question. Who can act as intermediary between Poles and Germans? Personally I am convinced that nobody but Mussolini can and am consequently the more perturbed over the apparent blind unwillingness of the French to settle quickly their really comparatively small questions with Italy. Quite apart from everything else, one of the things which makes the Germans jump is the idea of a possible reconciliation between Paris and Rome. It is solely the French attitude which keeps driving Mussolini more and more into the German arms.

NEVILE HENDERSON

APPENDIX II

Foreign Office Memorandum on the Danzig question with additional comments by Sir N. Henderson

THE DANZIG QUESTION¹

[C 6716/54/18]

FOREIGN OFFICE, May 5, 1939

Historical Introduction

The history of Danzig reveals the innate contradiction of its geographical position as a Polish port and its national character as a German city.

- (a) *Under Polish rule, 1000–1308.*—In the tenth and eleventh centuries Danzig, then a small village at the mouth of the Vistula, and the surrounding territory formed part of the Polish kingdom. On the death of the Polish King Boleslas III in 1138, his kingdom was partitioned; Danzig came under the rule of the Dukes of Pomerelia, obtained the status of a municipality, and became a trading centre.
- (b) *Under the Teutonic Order, 1308–1454.*—The Order captured Danzig in 1308 in the name of the Polish King Ladislas, but kept it for themselves. Danzig's prosperity increased, and the city joined the Hanseatic League in the fourteenth century. Its growing independence brought it into conflict with the Order, and it became united to Poland in 1454.
- (c) *Under Polish rule, 1454–1793.*—Danzig, while acknowledging the sovereignty of the Polish kings, enjoyed a wide measure of independence. As the seaport of the Polish Hinterland and as a member of the Hanseatic League it became rich and powerful, with a strong sense of civic patriotism.
- (d) *Under Prussian rule, 1793–1807.*—The prosperity of Danzig had declined in the eighteenth century and the city fell without resistance to Prussia under the second partition of Poland.
- (e) *A Free City, 1807–1814.*—By the Treaty of Tilsit, Danzig became a Free City under the joint protection of France, Prussia and Saxony, and its ancient liberties and constitution were restored. It had, however, a French military governor and garrison, and suffered heavily in the Napoleonic wars.
- (f) *Under Prussian rule, 1814–1920.*—On its return to Prussia, Danzig was reduced to the status of a Prussian provincial capital and seaport. In 1920, after a brief Allied Occupation, Danzig once again became a Free City.

The Danzig Question at Versailles

2. President Wilson's Thirteenth Point contained the provision that Poland should be given free and secure access to the sea, and it was the problem of reconciling this pledge with the principle of self-determination which led to the establishment of the Corridor and the Free City of Danzig. The Polish claim to the Corridor was unassailable. From the earliest times it had been inhabited by Slavs

¹ This memorandum was prepared for the use of the Cabinet.

and its population has always been predominantly Polish. In 1931 the province of Pomorze had a population of over a million, of which just over 90 per cent. were Poles. There was, however, no seaport on the coast of Pomorze, and the Peace Conference was advised that it was not possible to create one. It was therefore necessary to make use of Danzig, the population of which was more than 90 per cent. German, but which geographically and historically was the natural outlet for the trade and commerce of the Vistula Basin. Both Germany and Poland claimed Danzig in full sovereignty, and the Treaty settlement was a compromise. It will be observed that historically there is a Polish as well as a German claim to Danzig. It has always been a bone of contention between Teuton and Slav.

The Treaty Settlement

3. The Free City, established by Articles 100–108 of the Treaty of Versailles, includes an area of 730 square miles and a population of about 400,000, of whom only some 15,000 are of Polish origin. The territory is on an average about 30 miles wide and 20 miles in depth extending on both banks of the Vistula, and has great potential strategic importance. Article 102 established Danzig as a Free City under the protection of the League of Nations. Article 103 provided for the drafting of a Constitution in agreement with a High Commissioner appointed by the League. The Constitution is placed under the guarantee of the League. The High Commissioner is entrusted with the duty of dealing in the first instance with all differences arising between Poland and Danzig in regard to the Treaty or arrangements made thereunder. The High Commissioner is to reside in Danzig. Article 104 provides for the negotiation of a Danzig–Polish Treaty with the following principal objects:—

- (a) The inclusion of Danzig in the Polish Customs Area.
- (b) The free use by Poland without any restriction of the harbour and waterways necessary for Polish imports and exports, and the right to develop the harbour works.
- (c) The control and administration by Poland of the Vistula, the railway system, and postal and telegraphic communications between Poland and Danzig.
- (d) The prevention of discrimination against Polish citizens and persons of Polish origin and speech.
- (e) The conduct by Poland of the foreign relations of the Free City.

The Constitution

4. The Constitution was approved by the League Council in 1922. It was liberal in character. It provided for a Popular Assembly elected for four years, and a Senate elected by the Assembly and combining the functions of a Head of State, a Cabinet, and an Upper Chamber. Article 4 of the Constitution provides that German shall be the official language, but that the Polish minority shall have guaranteed its free racial development. Article 5 provides that Danzig cannot, without the consent of the League Council, serve as a military or naval base, erect fortifications, or manufacture munitions.

Polish Rights

5. The rights given to Poland under Article 104 of the Treaty were worked out by the Convention of Paris of 1920 between Poland and Danzig², and in greater

² This Convention is printed in *British and Foreign State Papers*, vol. 113, p. 965.

detail by the Convention of Warsaw of 1921³ (which contains 244 articles). Article 39 of the Convention of Paris provided that differences arising under the convention and subsequent arrangements would be submitted to the High Commissioner, who would, if necessary, refer to the Council. Both parties retained the right of appeal to the Council.

The Application of the Treaty Settlement

6. The provisions of the Treaty, the Constitution, and the Conventions of Paris and Warsaw are the foundations of the complex events in Danzig since the war. Upon them have been superimposed decisions of the High Commissioners, resolutions of the Council, and judgments of the Permanent Court of International Justice.

7. The League Council sought at an early stage to define its responsibilities for the protection of the Free City. The commonly accepted definition is that the League 'undertakes to respect and maintain against all foreign aggression the territorial integrity and political independence of Danzig' (Report of Viscount Ishii, 1920). In 1921 the Council agreed that Poland is 'specially fitted to ensure the defence of Danzig by land as well as the maintenance of order, on the territory', and the High Commissioner was empowered to call in Polish troops in the event of an aggression or a danger of aggression from a neighbouring country other than Poland, as well as for the maintenance of order in the territory. This situation has not yet arisen.

Danzig since 1920

8. The post-war history of Danzig may be divided into two periods, 1920-1933 and 1933-1939.

9. In the period 1920-33 there were endless disputes between Danzig and Poland arising from the application of the Treaty settlement, mostly on economic questions, and the main task of the High Commissioner and the Council was to arbitrate between them. The difficulty of enforcing its decisions in Danzig was, however, always a problem for the Council.

10. In the period 1933-39 the position changed. The rise of National Socialism, which had inevitable repercussions in Danzig, led to a settlement by direct negotiation of the outstanding questions between Danzig and Poland, and, after the signature of the Polish-German declaration of 1934, the Council was troubled no more with Polish-Danzig disputes. These continued, but were dealt with outside Geneva. But the efforts to introduce National Socialism into Danzig led to encroachments on the rights of minorities and threats to the Constitution, and, instead of constant disputes between Danzig and Poland, there were disputes between Danzig and the Council itself. It was legally possible to modify the Constitution, with the approval of the Council, by a two-thirds vote of the Popular Assembly. But in the elections of 1934 the Nazis failed by a narrow margin to obtain this majority. They accordingly proceeded by illegal means, and developments led in 1935 to an open breach with the Council and to the resignation of the High Commissioner, Mr. Lester. The Polish Government was invited to use their influence with the Danzig Senate, and, after complicated and difficult negotiations, the Council agreed to appoint another High Commissioner, M. Burckhardt, it being tacitly understood that the process of nazification in Danzig could not be reversed. The Council took this decision with reluctance and largely to satisfy

³ This Convention is printed *ibid.*, vol. 131, p. 779.

Poland, but until October 1938 the position was tolerable. M. Burckhardt, by the exercise of great diplomatic skill, established good relations with the Senate and was able to mitigate the lot of the minorities and to prevent open breaches of the Constitution. But he depended for the efficacy of his action almost entirely on his personal influence; the events in Czecho-Slovakia and the anti-Semitic outbursts in Germany forced the issue; and there were breaches of the Constitution which the Council could no longer ignore. Only the insistence of Poland, and the difficulty for the Council of modifying unilaterally the treaty position, has hitherto prevented the withdrawal of the High Commissioner and an alteration in the League's connexion with the Free City.

Polish Policy

11. Until 1934 Polish policy was to maintain Polish Treaty rights in Danzig by invoking the assistance of the Council. After 1934 the Polish Government perceived the threat to their interests from National Socialism in Danzig, and, relying on their agreement with Germany for the maintenance of the status of the Free City and their own rights, sought to conjure the threat by condoning the nazification of the Free City. By failing to support the Council's efforts to maintain the Constitution, they thereby contributed to the weakening and the final undermining of the authority of the League and its High Commissioner. They have, however, insisted on the maintenance of the League's connexion with Danzig with the object of using it as a bargaining counter in negotiations with Germany.

Policy of His Majesty's Government

12. As *Rapporteur* to the Council for Danzig questions, His Majesty's Government have a special responsibility. Since 1936 they have endeavoured to support the authority of the High Commissioner, while letting it be known both in Berlin and Warsaw that they would welcome any modification of the present status of the Free City on which both Germany and Poland would agree. Such an agreement, or the establishment, as the result of elections which were due to be held in the Spring of this year, of a Nazi majority of two-thirds in the Popular Assembly, would have created a new situation, and might have enabled the League to modify and perhaps to relinquish its responsibilities in Danzig.

Internal situation in Danzig and German policy

13. Events in Danzig itself have the pettiness and often the absurdity of those in a small provincial town. In the earlier post-war years the Senate was mainly concerned to resist Polish encroachments and revive the tradition of Danzig independence and autonomy. In 1933 there was an internal political struggle ending in the elimination by the Nazis of the other political parties. Since 1936, there has been a latent contest between the President of the Senate, Herr Greiser, and the local Gauleiter, Herr Forster. Herr Greiser's object has been to maintain his own authority as the ruler of a Free City, and he has, therefore, shown no enthusiasm for a change in the status of Danzig and union with Germany. He has been supported by Field-Marshal Göring and has worked for the maintenance of the League High Commissioner. Herr Forster, with the support of Herr Hitler, has advocated a policy of complete nazification, but has hitherto been restrained from demanding union with Germany. Relations between Danzig and Germany have always been close, and there is an interchange of civil servants between the administrations. The Free City internally is now virtually a microcosm of the

Reich, but the German Government have until recently shown no desire to change the status of the Free City or to negotiate direct with the Polish Government; they have, indeed, tacitly encouraged the retention of the League High Commissioner. As they were reluctant to agree to a *modus vivendi* over Danzig and were not ready to impose a totalitarian solution, the presence of a neutral authority in Danzig was of convenience to them, so long as there was no serious check on internal developments.

Economic Position

14. Danzig depends for its prosperity on its transit and entrepôt trade; and it was in the interests of Danzig to facilitate Polish commerce in the Free City. But the tradition of independence and national feeling put every difficulty in the way of the Poles. In 1920, when the Poles were fighting the Bolsheviks, the Danzig authorities held up the supply of munitions. The Poles never forgot this, and subsequent disputes convinced them that their access to the sea through Danzig was not secure. They therefore decided to develop Gdynia. There was also a strategical reason: Danzig could not be fortified, and a Polish naval base would facilitate the defence of the Corridor, and provide another good reason against its return to Germany. The competition of Gdynia (8 miles from Danzig) alarmed the Danzigers. In 1921, a decision of the League High Commissioner had provided that the Polish Government would engage to make full use of the port of Danzig whatever other ports she might open in future on the Baltic coast, and the Danzig Senate repeatedly relied on this provision in protesting at the growing Polish use of Gdynia. Finally, in 1933, an agreement was reached between Danzig and Poland by which the Polish Government undertook to 'ensure for the Port of Danzig, so far as lay in its power, equal participation with Gdynia in the sea-borne traffic, taking into account the quantity and quality of the goods'. Poland has not fully observed this Agreement, and the disparity though small in point of volume has been considerable in point of value. Until recently, however, Danzig has been comparatively prosperous, the volume of traffic having progressively increased from 1933-38; she has also had a number of shipbuilding orders from Germany. Two factors have, however, struck a serious blow at the economic stability of Danzig. The anti-Jewish campaign has led to the departure of the wealthy Jews with their capital and to the closing down of a number of prosperous Jewish businesses. And the absorption of Czecho-Slovakia by Germany has caused a disastrous decline in the formerly important transit traffic between that country and Danzig, since Germany has diverted this traffic to purely German ports. The consequence has been a steady decline in the gold cover of the Danzig gulden, which has already once been devalued, and the introduction of measures of currency restriction which have further undermined confidence. Meanwhile, the Senate has embarked on grandiose and expensive Nazi building schemes, for which the contractor is Herr Forster's father-in-law. There is accordingly some reason to fear a financial and economic collapse in the near future.

Present Position

15. In 1938 there was a likelihood of Polish-German negotiations over Danzig. At Colonel Beck's interview with Herr Hitler in December, Herr Hitler gave him assurances that he was prepared for the moment to leave the Danzig question on one side, and both Germany and Poland pressed for the temporary maintenance of the League position in Danzig. No progress was made during Herr von Ribbentrop's visit to Warsaw in January. Immediately after the German *coup* in Prague,

German pressure was promptly applied in the East, on Lithuania, Poland, and Roumania. Certain demands, the exact nature of which are not yet fully known, as the Polish Government do not agree with the account given in Herr Hitler's speech on the 28th April, were made on Poland in respect of Danzig and the Corridor, and the High Commissioner was warned by Berlin that it would be healthy for him to leave. Preparations were apparently being made for a *coup de main* in Danzig, and there is reason to believe that this was only forestalled by the partial Polish mobilisation on the 23rd March and the British guarantee to Poland on the 31st March.

16. The German demands almost certainly included (1) the return of Danzig 'as a Free City' to the Reich, (2) the grant of an extra-territorial corridor across the Corridor, (3) an alignment of Polish policy with that of the Axis and perhaps Polish adherence to the Anti-Comintern Pact. In return, the Germans say they were ready to maintain the Polish economic rights in Danzig; guarantee the Polish frontiers; and to make some arrangement to allay Polish fears about Slovakia. The Polish attitude was that they were perfectly ready to negotiate a new settlement of the Danzig question, and were willing to abolish the servitudes on Danzig sovereignty, i.e., their control over the foreign affairs of Danzig, and the 'protection' of the League of Nations, as well as to improve the transit facilities across the Corridor, but they demanded that the status of Danzig as a Free City should be maintained and that the Free State should not be remilitarised, and they refused in their turn to accept a German servitude on the Polish Corridor. The Poles say that they are quite willing to treat the Danzig question on its merits but not to negotiate under menaces, and they will not surrender their vital interest in the security of their outlet to the sea.

17. It will readily be appreciated that the Danzig question, which is intimately bound up with that of the Corridor, can no longer be considered as a purely local question, the adjustment of German and Polish claims in a small territory. It has become a test case and the stakes may not be lower than the German attempt at domination of Eastern Europe, and Polish determination to maintain the independence of their foreign policy.

18. For Poland the problem is strategic and psychological as well as economic. The essential point strategically is that Danzig should remain demilitarised. The Polish Government have been impressed by the rapid militarisation of Memel, and they realise that if Danzig is similarly fortified Germany will acquire a stranglehold on the Corridor, and Gdynia will finally become untenable. At present Germany has comparatively few troops in East Prussia, and communications with Danzig are difficult. Polish troops can occupy Danzig in a few hours. If it be assumed that Poland would resist a German occupation of Danzig, the only sure method for Germany is to occupy Danzig in force from across the Corridor, i.e., by the invasion of Poland. In present conditions Germany could not easily reinforce East Prussia across the Corridor without the knowledge of Poland.

19. Psychologically, Polish rights in Danzig, where their main river finds its outlet to the sea, are a symbol of their national existence. If the Polish Government made concessions in Danzig and the Corridor of a nature to compromise their vital interests, not only would the confidence of Poles in themselves and their Government be undermined, but it is extremely probable that anti-German incidents in the Corridor would occur. The results would probably be German intervention or something akin to civil war in Poland.

20. Poles object to the use of the term 'Corridor'. They regard this area as Polish territory proper—the province of Pomorze—which happens to be bounded on the North by the Baltic Sea, on the East by East Prussia, and on the West by West Prussia. It is, in their view, not merely 'an outlet to the sea' tolerated by Germany, but ethnographically and historically a Polish province. In a word, Danzig and the Corridor are regarded by Poland as part of her 'Lebensraum'.

21. This aspect has considerable bearing on the refusal to allow an *extra-territorial* road and railway to be given to Germany across Polish territory, though they are willing to reduce visa and passport facilities to a minimum. It should be remembered that the present arrangements for transit across the Corridor have worked quite satisfactorily, certainly since 1934. Further, a unilateral solution of the Danzig question, i.e., the concession of German claims against Poland's will, would in fact not be a solution. For Poland could and would starve Danzig economically by refusing to use the harbour. Germany's inevitable answer would be to insist that Poland should cease this boycott, as Japan did in the case of China; and the result would be war or Poland's subservience to Germany.

22. On the German side the issue is equally plain. Their object is to use the Danzig and Corridor questions as a lever to secure the neutralisation and ultimately, perhaps, a further partition of Poland. There is good evidence to show that Germany regards Danzig merely as a 'pawn in the game', and that her real aim is the break-up of the Polish State. The recent German Note to Poland clearly implies that it is a condition of further negotiations that the Polish Government should relinquish their understandings with the Western Powers. Meanwhile, all the resources of German propaganda are directed, as regards Poland, to the thesis that England will not fulfil her guarantee on the issue of Danzig, and, as regards England, to the thesis that Polish rights in Danzig are not worth supporting.

23. It does not at present appear to be probable that Germany will attempt to impose a solution of Danzig or the Corridor by force, if she is certain that she will thereby become involved in a general war. It is certain that the Poles would resist such an attempt by force of arms. It is, however, always possible that the Danzig Senate and Popular Assembly might declare their desire to be incorporated in the Reich. Polish action in such a case is uncertain. If the declaration were unaccompanied by any further step, the situation would not be greatly altered. The mandate of the Danzig Popular Assembly has expired, and in any case such a declaration could not have any effect on the status of the Free City, which can only be altered by force or by a revision of existing agreements. If it were accompanied by an attempt to seize the Polish customs and Polish property in the Free City, the Poles would in all probability intervene to protect their rights. It is difficult to see how the effect of such a declaration could materially alter the situation, unless it was used as a pretext for armed German intervention. But it is probable that any unilateral alteration of the status of Danzig would be regarded by Poland as so provocative and so detrimental to her real independence that the ensuing deterioration of her relations with Germany would lead to actual hostilities.

24. Moreover, such a declaration by the Senate would not be a valid pretext. It has already been shown that internally Danzig is a microcosm of the Reich, and if it is maintained that a declaration by the Senate could have the consequence of altering the status of Danzig, it could also be maintained that a similar principle of self-determination should be applied elsewhere, e.g., in Prague.

25. In spite of the allegations of the German press, the present attitude of Poland cannot be described as provocative. There are allegations on both sides

of ill-treatment of the respective minorities, which are approximately equal in size, but such incidents as have taken place have been entirely of a minor character and such as have occurred without serious results at intervals during the past twenty years. It is clear that such incidents, whether real or manufactured, do not affect the fundamental issues at stake, and would not in themselves justify a German ultimatum to Poland any more than a Polish ultimatum to Germany.

Colonel Beck's Reply to Herr Hitler

26. Colonel Beck's speech was firm but unprovocative in tone and substance. He put the Danzig question in its historical setting. 'The Free City has existed for many centuries as a result properly speaking, if we exclude the emotional element, of a positive "cross" between German and Polish interests.' 'The German merchants of Danzig assured the development and prosperity of the city, thanks to Polish overseas trade.' 'The population is predominantly German but its livelihood depends on the economic potential of Poland.' 'We stand firmly on the ground of the rights and interests of our overseas trade . . . but we have purposely not exerted any influence on the free national, ideological and cultural development of the German majority.' Colonel Beck after quoting the German assurances previously given to him that Danzig would not be the object of conflict between Poland and Germany enquires the purpose of German policy. Is it the freedom of the German population (which is not menaced), or a question of barring Poland from the Baltic?

27. Colonel Beck referred to his positive proposals that there should be a common German-Polish guarantee of the existence and rights of the Free City. As regards the 'Corridor' (and he objected to the application of this word to an 'ancient Polish land') Poland had already given to Germany full railway transit facilities and was prepared to extend these facilities to road transport. Poland had, however, no ground whatever for restricting her sovereignty over her own territory.

28. Colonel Beck denied that the Polish Government had knowledge of concrete German proposals about Slovakia and a pact of non-aggression. As regards the former, he said that Poland would not make bargains with the interests of others. As regards the second, he pointed out that recognition of the Polish frontiers would merely be recognition of what was indisputably Polish property.

29. He therefore claimed that Germany was asking Poland for one-sided concessions over Danzig.

30. In conclusion, he stressed Poland's desire for peace; there were two conditions for this: (1) peaceful intentions, and (2) peaceful methods of action. If these conditions were observed, all conversations were possible. If conversations materialised, Poland would regard the problem objectively and with goodwill.

31. The implied doubt as to the aims of German policy is fully understandable, and there is nothing in Colonel Beck's speech to which a Government, which was concerned only with the problem of a new settlement of the status of Danzig, could take exception. He has left the door wide open for further conversations; he has advanced no unreasonable claims, and made no demands. But the effect of the speech is apparently to pass the initiative back to Germany as regards the prosecution of further negotiations.

32. While the path to a freely negotiated settlement of the Danzig question therefore lies open, it is unlikely that an early compromise will be found. Unless the German Government are convinced that they can act with impunity and without meeting resistance, it is doubtful whether they will seek at once to force

the issue, but time will be required before the disposition to negotiate which has been professed on both sides can have concrete results.

Letter from Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Mr. Strang

[C 7317/54/18]

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN, May 12, 1939

1. Many thanks for the Foreign Office memorandum of May 5 on the Danzig question.

2. Unpopular though it may be to say so, the 'Present position' portion (paragraphs 15 to 22) does not strike me as a strictly impartial statement of the problem as between Poland and Germany. The Polish case is set out at some length, but the German case is somewhat summarily dismissed in paragraph 22 on the basis mostly of suppositions as to what her ulterior aims are.

3. It is true unfortunately that those suppositions are likely to be entirely correct, particularly if the past is any guide to the future. Nevertheless, as you know, Germany has a case on its own merits and I should have thought that it would have been fairer to state it, particularly if the memorandum is intended as a Cabinet paper. If it is desired to dispose of it, is it not wisest to put a case at its strongest, rather than at its weakest?

4. Danzig is a purely German city and, quite apart from ulterior and sinister motives, it is a fact that even the most pacific of Germans should desire its return to the Reich. I doubt if at any time during the past year and a half Hitler has had his people so much at the back of him as he has over this Polish question. If Berlin had a Place de la Concorde, the statue of Danzig would be no less veiled in crepe than Strasbourg was for fifty years.

5. It is the same with the Corridor. It would be galling for any nation to be cut off from part of its possessions by a strip of territory belonging to some other Power.

6. Those two issues are at least as plain as the hypothetical ambitions quoted in paragraph 22. It is sad that it should be so, but there they are and as such they have got to be faced. The question therefore to my mind is how far these natural aspirations, which date from long before Hitler's time or his expansionist dreams, can be satisfied without prejudicing the legitimate strategic and economic or even psychologic apprehensions of the Poles. If this cannot be done, then we must either face the prospect of guaranteeing Poland till the next war breaks out at a moment of Germany's choosing or of deciding ourselves that we had better make war now and try to break Hitler before it is too late.

7. Since both alternatives are horrible, what prospect is there of reconciling Hitler's offer as quoted in his speech of April 28 with Beck's reply on May 5?

8. As the Foreign Office memorandum observes, Danzig is virtually already a microcosm of the Reich. In any case it is not Polish and its actual incorporation as a Free City (as offered by Hitler) in the Reich would make little difference, *provided* it is effectively not militarised and *provided* all Poland's economic privileges were assured to her. As the prosperity of Danzig depends entirely on the Polish trade, the latter point should not be a difficult one to settle. Nor would it seem unfair for Poland to exchange her control of Danzig's foreign policy and her demand for a joint Germano-Polish guarantee for a German undertaking not to militarise Danzig. However little faith one may have in Hitler's undertakings, I would personally prefer to guarantee Poland after they had been given than before a settlement of the Danzig question.

9. Also there seems advantage in settling, if it be possible, Danzig separately from the Corridor. The Corridor is Polish but Danzig is not, and it will be much easier for Germany to trump up some case about the latter such as will give her people the impression of being the victim of Polish or Western aggression. That is what I particularly fear. One's objective should be, if it must be, a war in which Germany's aggressiveness should be patent to all the world, including the Germans themselves.

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